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ABSTRACT

Drawing on the literary heritage of New England, this collection of articles highlights the works of six different authors spanning the early English settlements to the post-Civil War period. Originally presented at six seminars for teachers and designed to feature humanities in Connecticut schools, the articles and their authors are as follows: (1) "William Bradford's 'Plymouth Plantation': Puritans, Indians and the Wilderness" (Lawrence J. Kazura); (2) "'Walden' and Civil Disobedience" (David Curtis); (3) "Ishmael, Ahab, and the White Whale" from Herman Melville's "Moby Dick" (Leonard Engel); (4) "Harriet Beecher Stowe: 'Uncle Tom's Cabin': A Reconsideration for Our Time" (Jordon Pecile); (5) "Privileged and Imperiled Youth: Huck Finn and Mark Twain Resist Adulthood" (Thomas Grant); and (6) "Emily Dickinson: Implications of Time and Place" (Judith Davis Miller). (Most of the articles include bibliographies. A list of related classroom activities and a resource inventory are appended.) (NKA)

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The Noblest of Thoughts:
Literature and American History

by

Betty Olson

and

Tedd Levy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Note to Reader i

Background for The Noblest of Thoughts 1

William Bradford's Plymouth Plantation:
Puritans, Indians and the Wilderness 4

Henry David Thoreau: Walden and "Civil
Disobedience" 16

Ishmael, Ahab, and the White Whale 28

Harriet Beecher Stowe: Uncle Tom's Cabin:
A Reconsideration For Our Time 45

Privileged and Imperiled Youth: Huck Finn and
Mark Twain Resist Adulthood 59

Emily Dickinson: Implication of Time
and Place 72

Activities 82

Resources 85

Note to the Reader

This handbook is the end product of six seminars on literature and American history conducted for teachers in Norwalk, Connecticut during the spring of 1986. Titled The Noblest of Thoughts, the seminar selections highlighted the work of six individual authors and spanned the time from the early English settlements to the post-Civil War period. Each seminar consisted of a presentation by a noted humanities scholar and was followed by discussion and the exchange of teaching ideas for using the content of the presentation with secondary school students.

Several people contributed to the success of the seminars and deserve our recognition and gratitude:

Mrs. Carolyn Rosenfield, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Norwalk, and Dr. David C. Danahar, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Fairfield University, provided encouragement and support throughout the project.

Mrs. Anne Stasiewski, former Language Arts Supervisor, and Mr. Lawrence Bloch, Social Studies Supervisor, Norwalk Public Schools, gave their time and expertise to ensure the smooth functioning of the seminars; Mrs. Susan Garcia, the current Language Arts Supervisor, gave similarly to ease the task of producing this handbook; Mrs. Betty Scanlon, Language Arts Secretary, typed several drafts with skillful care; and Mr. Raymond Senes, Fiscal Agent for the Norwalk Public Schools, contributed his talents to keep us fiscally organized and accurate.

Several humanities scholars shared their knowledge with insight and sensitivity to make the seminar series a success:

Dr. David Curtis, English Department,
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Jordon Pecile, Department of Humanities,
U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, CT 06320

Dr. Nicholas Rinaldi, English Department Chairperson at Fairfield University, deserves singular attention for obtaining such distinguished scholars and serving as our genial and learned moderator.

Ms. Jane Christie Smith, Assistant Director of the Connecticut Humanities Council, deserves special recognition for helping shape an idea into an acceptable proposal for funding. She gave a considerable amount of her valuable time, offered useful suggestions, and generated a blend of realism and optimism that encouraged us to pursue our belief that teachers need more time and opportunities to share ideas with one another.

Thanks are due to the many teachers from the Norwalk Public Schools and Norwalk's Central Catholic High School, for their enthusiastic participation during each seminar. The high quality of their interaction allowed each session to truly explore the noblest of thoughts.

Last, and most important, we wish to recognize and thank the Connecticut Humanities Council, the state committee of the National Endowment for the Humanities, for funding this proposal, and the Norwalk Public Schools for providing additional support through the generous contribution of personnel and materials.

Betty Olson
Tedd Levy
Norwalk, Connecticut
January 1, 1987

The Background for Noblest of Thoughts

The national media has reported that the schools face numerous difficulties. Heavy teaching loads, limited libraries, textbooks "written down" for youngsters who have difficulty reading, and uncertain standards for academic achievement all add to the unhappy prospects for the humanities in the schools. Connecticut communities have experienced many of these problems, its school systems being a microcosm of the larger American society. Aging teachers, declining enrollments, and lack of public support among other problems have concerned local school officials. At the same time, the communities and school systems are making major efforts at renewal. We may be at the threshold of a refreshing new spirit. It is a most propitious opportunity for the humanities to make an impact.

Growing numbers of teachers, often encouraged by salary incentives, have made efforts to upgrade their skills. However, most of the opportunities for learning new skills and knowledge have been in technological fields. The humanities have generally been neglected.

The Norwalk School System, in cooperation with the Norwalk Federation of Teachers, has developed a notable inservice education program. During the 1984-85 school year, some 37 courses were offered which enrolled approximately 300 teachers. Both the number of courses and the enrollment increased dramatically in 1985-86. However, none of these courses specifically used the humanities, nor had a program been offered since a National Humanities Faculty program in 1972-73.

A survey to which 45 Norwalk Secondary Language Arts and Social Studies teachers responded, reflected both the need and desire for greater attention to the humanities.

A vast majority of those responding to the survey were seasoned teachers. For a majority, their last course in U.S. History or American literature was taken while in college.

When asked of what importance the humanities are for today's students, 69 percent of the teachers surveyed responded "very great importance." Some 31 percent indicated it was "somewhat important" and no one responded that it was "not very important."

Although important, teachers did not think their students were particularly well prepared. When asked how they would rate the knowledge/skills/attitude level in the humanities for students entering their classes, 58 percent said it was "low level," 42 percent said it was "moderate," and no one responded that it was "high level."

When asked if they would take an inservice course in the humanities if offered in the spring of 1986, a surprisingly large 69 percent indicated they would. The approach thought to be most useful, according to 73 percent of the teachers, was a combination of content and classroom ideas and activities. The responses we received would be representative of teachers in many other Connecticut school systems.

With these findings, we approached the Connecticut Humanities Council and with their help and support, developed a proposal to fund a series of six seminars and a handbook. This handbook includes the papers presented by the humanities scholars and a collection of teaching ideas and related humanities resources.

If teachers are to make a difference with today's youngsters, they need support. "Young people today," as noted in a recent report on the humanities (The Humanities in American Life, Berkeley; University of California Press, 1980, p. 59), "are largely detached from the literary and historical bases of culture that previous generations took for granted. They therefore need, probably more than any generation before them, eloquent evidence of the duration of human culture and reassurance that they are a living part of that culture."

Humanities education in the schools, according to a review in the June, 1985 Kappan, can help people address matters of value, discern the good, the true,

the beautiful; and become more responsible in an age when irresponsibility may not be simply unfortunate but calamitous.

William J. Bennett, former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and now Secretary of Education, has stated that schools ought to be the place for the cultivation of mind, imagination, and character by exposure to civilization's best thoughts and finest utterances.

"The availability of universal secondary education in the United States provides the most complete opportunity for this to take place for all of our young citizens. Indeed," he writes, "the secondary schools are our last opportunity to provide for everyone at least some sense of the intellectual inheritance that is part of everyone's birthright."

This handbook is one of the results of the seminar series held for teachers in the Norwalk Public and Parochial Secondary Schools. Drawing on our New England literary heritage, the seminars and this handbook attempt to address the hopes and fears expressed by educators and humanists, and to take one small step in restoring "the intellectual inheritance that is part of everyone's birthright."

Plymouth Plantation:
Puritans, Indians and the Wilderness

William Bradford

1590 - 1657

One of the Pilgrim Fathers and American colonial governor and historian born in Austerfield, Yorkshire, England. Joined the Separatists and sailed with 102 passengers on the Mayflower in 1620 in search of religious freedom. Served as governor from 1621 through 1656 having been re-elected thirty times.

He negotiated a treaty with Massasoit, chief of the Wampanoag Indians. Massasoit disavowed Indian claims to the Plymouth area and pledged peace with the colonists. He (Bradford) was delegate on four occasions to the New England Confederation, of which he was twice elected president.

Wrote History of Plymouth Plantation, published for the first time in 1856, later to become the basic source for information about the Pilgrims and early colonization.

Synopsis William Bradford

History of Plymouth Plantation

Bradford records in his journal early colonial life beginning on December 21, 1620. The newly arrived colonist was assigned a small plot of land, and he and his family improvised a temporary shelter for use while his more permanent two-story wooden house was under construction. Most of the furniture was made by the owner or a local craftsman.

The Indians were regarded as savage and barbarians. The white settlers felt it their duty to convert them to "civilized ways." The New England population consisted of several distinct classes. A small number of titled noblemen and affluent merchants attempted to recreate the living or life style of Europe, but the much larger class of artisans and farmers lived with a simplicity that was in harmony with their practical and religious purposes. Only these two groups were eligible to vote and hold office. The remaining classes were unskilled laborers and wage earners, indentured servants, and Indian and African slaves. Bradford records the day by day experience of a unique group of people who faced the unknown with courage and trepidation.

William Bradford's Plymouth Plantation: Puritans, Indians and the Wilderness

by Lawrence J. Kazura
Fairfield University

William Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation is a work of exceptional literary distinction and historical value. Written during the earliest decades of European settlement in New England, it records the dramatic story of the region's beginnings as an outpost of English civilization. Bradford resolved at the outset to write his history "in a plain style, with singular regard unto the simple truth in all things; at least as near as my slender judgment can attain the same."

William Bradford was an active participant in many of the events he describes. He was born into a prosperous farming family in Yorkshire in 1590. He joined the Scrooby congregation of English Calvinist dissidents and departed with them for Holland in 1609, and was a passenger on the Mayflower in 1620. From the arrival at Plymouth in December until his death in 1657, Bradford was chosen thirty times as governor in the annual elections for that office in the colony. Reading Bradford, then, provides students with access to an extraordinary primary source and an opportunity to appreciate the complex realities that lie behind facile and not always reliable textbook generalization.

Inasmuch as Plymouth and the Pilgrims are so embedded in American folklore, students will have at

least some rudimentary knowledge of the topic even before it is formally studied. Moreover, that there is a tremendous human interest story at the core of Bradford's history can be exploited to help overcome the principal difficulty with Bradford: the antiquity and consequent occasional obscurity of his language. In light of this, it is not practical to assign the work as a whole to students. Judicious selection of excerpts from the work, however, can obviate most difficulties in this regard.

The use of Bradford's history gives teachers the opportunity to introduce pivotally important themes and topics at the beginning of a course. These include:

1) Native Americans and English immigrants - interaction, acculturation and the resistance of each to the other.

2) The legacy and character of Puritanism - a subject so important that the scholar Perry Miller thought American history incomprehensible without it. For a fuller view of this topic, students might read the frequently anthologized The Model of Christian Charity address by John Winthrop (Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony) as well as the selections from Bradford's history.

3) The transplantation of European culture to and its transformation by the American wilderness. In this context, a comparison of the ways in which the English and the Indians related to and utilized the American environment (the land and its plants and animals) would be of considerable interest to students.

Finally, students can be sensitized to the inevitable subjectivity of all historical writing by contrasting Bradford's account of certain events and personalities (the Pequot War and Thomas Morton of Merrymount, for instance) with those of recent historians of Colonial America. They can be made aware of shifting mentalities and their reflection in the historical literature. The objective would be to enhance their capacity for critical judgment when reading.

The first topic, the encounter between the Pilgrims and the Algonquin Indians of New England, is probably the easiest in which to interest students. It affords the opportunity to introduce the newest perspective on North American history as an interaction between three peoples (red, white and black) and to correct the ethnocentric bias by which most accounts of Indian-white relations are flawed.

Bradford, who expresses great hostility toward the Indians on many occasions, reflects such bias. He characterized them as "cruel, barbarous and most treacherous" cannibals who take sadistic delight in killing others. Obviously, Bradford cannot be given the final word. Students need to be reminded that the Pilgrims were interlopers and not infrequently guilty of the greatest injustice in their dealings with Indians. There were whites who admired and befriended the Indians (Roger Williams and William Penn among them) but such individuals were uncommon. Most Englishmen wanted them out of the way and used such negative characterizations as pretexts for their dispossession. Eventually, surviving Indians were socially segregated and relegated to an inferior position in a racial caste system.

Consideration of this topic might begin with a discussion of the development of Native American culture in New England before the arrival of Europeans. Students should be aware that the Indians encountered by the Pilgrims were descendants of wandering bands of big game hunters who had come to the area 10,000 years or more before. As the climate grew warmer, important changes occurred. Smaller animals--deer, elk, moose--were hunted. Finally, in southern New England, agriculture was developed and by the time Europeans arrived had become the most important source of food. Hunting and fishing continued but grain became the major component of the diet of the farming Indians of southern New England.

Population density increased and by 1600 the total Indian population of New England was 100,000 or more (the white population of New England was only 93,000 in 1700). With agriculture had come villages and a more settled existence. A sexual division of labor emerged. All phases of farming and fishing belonged to women. Hunting was the responsibility of

men as was the exercise of political authority among the Algonquin tribes of New England. Male chiefs or "sachems" wielded their power cautiously and could not exercise it in the absence of the consent of their people.

The arrival of Europeans was a catastrophe for Native Americans. The settlement of Plymouth was the byproduct of demographic disaster which depopulated the New England wilderness. Some Puritans professed to see the hand of God in this. God was emptying the land of its savage and pagan inhabitants to clear the way for his chosen people.

English fishermen stopping along the southern New England coast in 1616 were the cause. They brought with them smallpox or viruses to which the previously unexposed natives lacked immunity. The result was a "virgin soil epidemic" in which whole villages disappeared and half or more of the population of New England perished. Bradford himself offers a vivid account of the dreadful effects of this epidemic.

To Bradford, New England was no Garden of Eden. "A hideous and desolate wilderness," he called it, "full of wild beasts and wild men." The implication was clear. Chaos and savagery must give way before order and civility.

Bradford's account of Pilgrim relations with the Indians exemplifies this ethnocentrism. It is reflected in his description of the decision to confiscate caches of corn and beans at Indian villages on Cape Cod in November, 1620. "And here is to be noted a special providence of God, and a great mercy to his poor people, that here they got seed to plant them corn the next year, or else they might have starved." God, not the Indians, is given the credit.

After the move to Plymouth from Cape Cod, the Pilgrims warily kept their distance from the local Wampanoag Indians. Half the settlers died within a few months. Bradford's description of this "Starving Time" is memorable. "But that which was most sad and lamentable was, that in two or three months time half of their company died..."

At the end of the winter, Indians and the surviving pilgrims finally met in March, 1621. Bradford records the provisions of the treaty negotiated between them. Historians have ever since cited it as an example of the fairness of Pilgrim policy. A recent account, however, reveals it for what it really was: an assertion of political domination over the Indians. Nor were the Indians welcome in Pilgrim villages. Social segregation became another feature of Plymouth's Indian policy. The Pilgrims "eschewed relationships of mutual obligation in favor of those in which they could maintain firm control" (Neal Salisbury, Manitou and Providence. New York, 1982. Excellent discussion of the Indian policy of the Plymouth Colony: pp.214-225). In his account of conflict between Indians and settlers at Fairfield, Connecticut in 1644, Bradford provides an instructive example of this. The English, he makes clear, were exacting tribute from the Indians and required them to submit to English law and courts. This was not the policy of the French in Canada and more amicable relations there were the result.

One exception to the Pilgrim policy of segregation was their relationship to the English-speaking Squanto who served the role of mediator between local Indians and the Pilgrims. He was the colony's interpreter and taught the settlers how to plant corn using fish as fertilizer. Bradford calls him "a special instrument of God for their good." Notwithstanding Squanto's assistance, Plymouth's relations with Indians near and far deteriorated. The situation was exacerbated by the Great Migration of Puritans to Massachusetts Bay in 1630 and subsequent English emigration to Connecticut.

The new arrivals wanted land. The Indians stood in their way. Roger Williams questioned the validity of the Massachusetts Bay Colony's title to the Indian lands it occupied. When his differences with the magistrates of Massachusetts on this issue became heated, Williams moved to Plymouth (the two colonies were separate until the former absorbed the latter in 1691). According to Bradford, he was "a man godly and zealous, having many precious parts but very

unsettled in judgment" who fell into "some strange opinions, and from opinion to practice." As a result, he left Plymouth in 1633. According to historian Neal Salisbury, however, his unorthodox views on Indian land title were more to the point. He accused the English of having usurped Indian land, denied that the land was unoccupied before the English arrived and rejected the claim that mere "discovery" of it conferred title. Governor John Winthrop responded that "if we had no right to this land, yet our God hathe the right to it, and if he be pleased to give it to us (taking it from a people who had so long usurped upon him and abused his creatures) who shall control him or his terms."

The upshot was the bloody Pequot War of 1636-1637. Bradford's account of the decisive encounter in that war is a remarkably dramatic one. In May 1637 the English surrounded and set fire to a Pequot village on the Mystic River in Connecticut. Those who managed to escape from their burning wigwams were mowed down by Puritan guns or swords. Most were noncombatants--women, children and those too old to fight.

> ...those that scaped the fire were slain with the sword, some hewed to pieces, others run through with their rapiers, so as they were quickly dispatched and very few escaped. It was conceived they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stink and scent thereof; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave the praise thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to enclose, their enemies in their hands and give them so speedy a victory over so proud and insulting an enemy.

The surviving Pequots were sold into slavery. Only the Wampanoags and Narragansetts among the Indians of southern New England managed to fend off total English political control. Forty years later, however, King Philip's War in 1676 dealt a fatal blow to these Indians as well. The whites may have paid a terribly high price in lives and property for their victory but Indian society in New England would never be strong enough again to contest white territorial expansion. Their population had dropped to below 12,000 in 1675 from over 100,000 in 1600.

Of the many disputes in which the colony became embroiled subsequent to settlement in 1620, that with Thomas Morton of Merrymount, an Anglican friend of the Indians, is probably the most colorful as well as the most significant. Bradford's account of the incident is an interesting although exceptionally partisan one.

Thomas Morton had assumed control of a colony established by a Captain Wollaston at Quincy in 1623. Morton admired the Indians and got along well with them. His success as an Indian trader (Bradford's charge that he sold guns to them has been disputed) and "great licentiousness" evoked Bradford's wrath. He condemned Morton as the "Lord of Misrule" whose followers led a "dissolute life." Their crimes included setting up a maypole, drinking wine and dancing with Indian women. For Governor Bradford, Morton was an agent of sexual license and cultural disorder. His presence could not be tolerated. In June of 1628, Miles Standish was sent to destroy the settlement.

In 1642, Bradford decried a great outbreak of wickedness--adultery, sodomy, bestiality--and offered some very revealing explanations for its occurrence. "Wickedness being here more stopped by strict laws," he wrote, "and the same more nearly looked unto so it cannot run in a common road of liberty as it would and is inclined, it searches everywhere and at last breaks out where it gets vent." A young man "16 or 17 years of age" was convicted of buggery "with a mare, a cow, two goats, five sheep, two calves and a turkey." He and the animals were executed. Decline had set in. Too many people of unsuitable character had been allowed to emigrate, claimed Bradford. "It

is ever to be remembered that where the Lord begins to sow good seed, there the envious man will begin to sow tares," concluded Bradford.

Bradford had made much of the abandonment of the communal pattern of farms for individual plots. This was the "fitter" course given the universality of human "corruption." But more was involved as the colony was desperately seeking a source of profit.

Historian William Cronon has made it eminently clear in his recent book Changes in the Land that the settlers were capitalists from the beginning. Their view of property differed profoundly from that of the natives. Indian hunting, fishing and farming had affected the land little. The Pilgrims in their intensive farming, frantic search for fur-bearing animals and felling trees for lumber, according to Cronon, contributed to a profound "economic transformation of New England" (soil exhaustion, destruction of fur-bearing mammal populations, deforestation). "Capitalism and environmental degradation went hand in hand." Native Americans regarded land as sacred and usually held it in common. The Pilgrims and their fellow Puritans in New England, however, saw it as a commodity and based social distinctions upon its possession (the propertyless occupying the lowest rung of the social ladder). The persistent search for new land resulted in the dispersion of the colony's population and a consequent loss of social cohesion and "diminished sense of the colony's spiritual purpose."

It is a development against which Bradford's counterpart in Massachusetts Bay Colony, Governor John Winthrop, had eloquently warned in his famous "A Model of Christian Charity" address in 1630. "We are," he proclaimed, "entered into covenant" with God. If we break the covenant and "fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnal intentions...the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us." But if we avoid selfishness and greed, "entertain each other in brotherly affection," "abridge ourselves of our superfluities for the supply of others' necessities," "delight in each other" and "make others' condition our own," then God "shall make us a praise and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantations: 'The Lord make it like

that of New England.' For we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us."

This Puritan sense of mission, to which Winthrop gives such moving expression, would become an enduring component of the American national character. At its worst, it has led to jingoism and self-righteousness. At its best, it has served as a catalyst for reform efforts to eliminate those injustices and inequalities which have tarnished the national image and made it something less than "a city upon the hill."

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Henry David Thoreau

1817 - 1862

American writer, philosopher and naturalist. Born in Concord, Massachusetts and educated at Harvard. Taught school in Concord and on Staten Island, New York.

His journals and essays have great literary value and reflect Thoreau's pronounced gift for a careful and refreshing writing style. Generally acknowledged to be one of the greatest independent thinkers America has produced, his brilliant essay "Civil Disobedience," has inspired a number of social and political reformers.

A lover of the outdoors, he moved to a crude hut in 1845 on the shore of Walden Pond. After a two year sojourn, he returned to Concord and wrote Walden, a philosophical study of life that is today considered an American classic.

Walden

Civil Disobedience

Synopsis — Henry David Thoreau

Walden, the journal which reflects Thoreau's essential theme "life lived when one is fully awake," was written in 1845-1847 and published in 1854. His withdrawal to Walden Pond was a desire to gain a pastoral life, a life outwardly simple, but inwardly complex. Thoreau struggled to recapture in his daily journals the purity and unity with nature that he experienced. The journal is related to the four seasons. This enabled him to draw parallels upon the season to life itself. The episode of spring, for example, allows him to focus on the thaw. "The thick ice melts, as does the snow, and flows away to nourish new plants, flowers and trees creating a freshened existence." The most insistent symbol of Walden, is of course, the pond, which represents that inner, deeper self that man seeks to know.

In his essay "The Duty of Civil Disobedience," Thoreau begins by agreeing with the motto, "that government is best which governs least." In July, 1846 he spent a night in jail for refusing to pay his poll tax, which he felt supported the Mexican War and the extension of slavery. His essential view was that government should further the social welfare; when it does not, the individual citizen has a right to protest. Thoreau's statements have had a far reaching effect. His ideas can be found in Mahatma Gandhi's "Sayagraha" and the philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr. and many civil rights organizations.

Henry David Thoreau
Walden and "Civil Disobedience"

by David Curtis
Sacred Heart University

Everyone knows at least two things about Henry David Thoreau: that he built and lived by himself in a cabin at Walden Pond and that he once went to prison for a principle. Not everyone knows that the cabin at Walden was within a short walk of the town of Concord or that Thoreau's jail term lasted but one night. Not everyone realizes how often Thoreau entertained guests at his woodland retreat or how often he went into Concord for a visit himself. Most don't pretend to understand why Henry was arrested or what he was trying to accomplish or prove in either of his great adventures. And though we may not like to admit it, the number of persons who have actually read the literature produced by these adventures is minute.

We may debunk the heroism of going to a rather pleasant village jail for a single summer evening, we may ridicule the self-reliance necessary for camping out in the neighboring woods, when Concord and friends and family were so near in case of emergency; but we cannot ignore the poetry of Walden or the challenge of "Civil Disobedience." Thoreau's greatness is in his art and artistry, not in his life, surely not in his personality. And even his most severe critics will concede that.

That most severe critic was the poet, James Russell Lowell, who in an 1865 essay branded Thoreau,

then three years dead, an egoist and a fraud. Thoreau was, according to Lowell, a slavish imitator of Ralph Waldo Emerson, chief of the Transcendentalists.

To Lowell, Thoreau's simplicity is false and his back-to-nature philosophy nonsense: "Mr. Thoreau seems to me to insist in public on going back to flint and steel, when there is a match-box in his pocket which he knows very well how to use at a pinch." Thus, Henry Thoreau's writings receded in his own century to be replaced by arguments about his character. Lowell had done his work well, but had Thoreau's defenders looked closer they might have found the key in Lowell's very attack to Henry's greatness. "There is no writing comparable with Thoreau's in kind," wrote Lowell, "that is comparable with it in degree where it is best." Yet to insist upon meeting Thoreau upon the page only is difficult, for everyone wishes to know more about the eccentric of Walden, and his prose takes hard reading. In Walden Thoreau remarks about our lazy reading habits:

> Most men have learned to read to serve a paltry convenience, as they have learned to cipher in order to keep accounts and not be cheated in trade; but of reading as a noble intellectual exercise they know little or nothing; yet this only is reading, in a high sense, not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tiptoe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to. ("Reading")

Thoreau's writing promises "noble intellectual exercise" and an awakening of our slumbering "nobler faculties," but only if we read on tiptoe and only if we are interested in that mysterious "high sense."

The idea of a hierarchy of senses or faculties is at the heart of the philosophy called Transcendentalism, and of the American breed of this "ism" Thoreau is the chief practitioner. While a study of Henry's life will tell us about his

eccentricities, it will do little to help us read him in a "high sense." Therefore, taking our cue from Lowell, let us quickly review the facts of Thoreau's life, and then move on to the "high sense" that is the Transcendental philosophy, which will enable us to read Thoreau's incomparable writing.

David Henry Thoreau (the name switch came later) was born in Concord, Massachusetts on July 12, 1817. He died in Concord forty-four years later on May 6, 1862. His family was middle class and mercantile. He was never poor, nor rich. He was graduated from Harvard in 1837. For a time he taught school, for a time he manufactured pencils (the family business), for a time he was a surveyor. He was uninterested in a profession. Henry wrote throughout his adult life, but made no money from it. He lectured when and where he could to support himself, but he required so little money, that his failure to adopt a steady profession troubled neither him nor his family. He had one great love in his life and that was nature. He insisted upon time to walk through the woods and by the ponds of Concord. Silence and solitude were his favorite companions. He was gifted in forest lore and was highly skilled in manual arts. His mentor and friend was the famous Emerson, but other Transcendentalists like Alcott and Channing, found him a splendid lens through which to study nature.

When Thoreau was 27 years old he went out to the woods at Walden Pond to live by himself on a piece of land owned by Emerson. He needed time to write what would become his first book, A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers. He wished to build his own house, grow his own food, and live simply. And there was a greater reason:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

Thoreau remained at Walden Pond for two years and two months, returning to the village for good in September, 1847. In July 1846, Thoreau, while on an

errand to town, was arrested and imprisoned for not having paid his poll tax. He spent one night in jail and was released when his Aunt Maria (much to Henry's anger) paid his tax. In 1848 Thoreau gave a lecture describing this experience. That lecture (which we would come to know as "Civil Disobedience") was published in essay form in 1849. Walden was published in 1854. On these two works Thoreau's fame has been built.

It should be noted that the America of the 1840's was becoming industrialized. In 1845 the Mexican War broke out. Throughout this period, slavery and the abolition thereof was the cardinal political and moral issue. Thus, Thoreau's world was changing quickly, even as he dug in at Walden Pond, to corner life.

Intellectually, Thoreau's world was dominated by Transcendentalism, a philosophy that Henry adhered to all of his life. And it is that philosophy and the way of being it prescribed that colored Thoreau's response to industrialization, the Mexican War, and slavery. His Transcendental beliefs shaped his actions, his thoughts, and most importantly, his art.

American Transcendentalism was the product of German Idealism and British Romanticism. From the American point of view it was a reaction against Calvinism and rationalism. Calvinism posited the theory of election. Man was supposed evil, depraved. He had disobeyed God, and he was damned. Only some men had been elected for salvation. This saving was to be accomplished through the gift of free grace. There was nothing man could do to change this ordination; he could only prepare himself for the gift of grace. The Transcendentalists argued that man had not sinned, but merely got lost, or rather had lost his spiritual nature. He, not God, must save himself. He could do so by perceiving the relationship between himself and God or spirit. By studying nature he could see the essence of the spirit. He must, however, discipline himself, purify himself, in order to see rightly. He must trust his intuitions (or as Thoreau would say his genius). God is within everybody, but modern man, beset by his workaday activities, cannot feel Him. God, therefore, can be seen most clearly in his purest

creation--nature--and once we see ourselves as kindred to nature, we will discover the divine within us, too.

Rationalism posited the view that all knowledge came to man empirically, through his sense perceptions. The Transcendentalists believed in an innate wisdom, separate from and superior to sensory knowledge. This was man's "high sense," his unsevered umbilical cord to the divine. This sense must, however, be kept vital. Whether one called it intuition, genius, or conscience, it had to be activated (through self-discipline) and heeded, if man were ever to approach his fullest potential.

When "Civil Disobedience" is read as a Transcendentalist manifesto, its import is clear. Thoreau is more interested in self-reform than in social or political reform. He offers no real solution to the problems of slavery or the Mexican War. He simply presents us with a methodology for freeing the conscience from the burdens of law, liberating the spirit of man from the matter of institutions: "It is for no particular item in the tax-bill that I refuse to pay it. I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the state, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually."

Making war on Mexico and extending slavery to the territories may be serious social crimes, but they pale next to the crime of ignoring what one's conscience tells one is right. Thus, we act rightly to be free and to be whole; the alternative is to become a part of the machinery of state. Thoreau tells us that "we should be men first, and subjects afterward." Our only obligation to the state is to do right, letting conscience, not a majority vote, define what the right is. The individual must stand apart from the mass to guard his integrity first; the social good will follow:

> I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name...if ten <u>honest</u> men only...aye, if <u>one HONEST</u> man, in this State of Massachusetts, <u>ceasing to hold slaves</u>, were actually to withdraw

> from this copartnership, and be locked up in the county jail it would be the abolition of slavery in America.

Ultimately, the government and its affairs meant little to Thoreau, and he bestowed "the fewest possible thoughts upon it." Further, in "Civil Disobedience" Thoreau maintains that one must disburden oneself of possessions to be free of the fear of losing them.

Ghandi in India and Martin Luther King in Alabama learned from this essay that "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison." But half-men, Thoreau knew, take only half measures. Thoreau tells his readers to "Cast your whole vote...your whole influence" against injustice; to do so one must be a whole person. And it is the Transcendental principle of self-reliance, trust of the divinity within, that assure wholeness.

The vision of the ideal state was that to Thoreau--a vision. Yet in Walden, we find him working very hard indeed in an effort to thicken his idealism and lighten his mind. The difference is that Thoreau's work--building the cabin, hoeing his garden, erecting his chimney, baking his bread, sounding his pond--is non-alienating. He builds a cabin to live in, not to rent out to another; he bakes bread to eat, not sell. And he is careful not to labor all day. For Thoreau the cost of anything is measured by the life expended in getting it, and he did not go out to Walden Pond to lose life but to find it. We are advised to work only to feed, clothe, and shelter ourselves, and if our needs are simple, our work will seem like play.

The satire in "Economy," is directed not at the rich and fashionable, but rather at those who would work their life away trying to be rich and fashionable. Thoreau writes to desperate men and "poor students," those whose studying of life is poorly done, those whose life is dissipated in an endless pursuit of the unnecessary. "Simplify, simplify" ("Where I Lived, and What I Lived For") is the first lesson Walden teaches and one of the last

as well: "In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex" ("Conclusion"). Simplicity clears the rubbish from our lives and allows us "to front only the essential facts" of it. The American Dream of material success, a bigger house, newer clothes, more furniture, unlimited money, encumbers us with things, renders us matter-bound.

Walden is structured around the day and the seasons. A chapter such as "Sounds" begins at dawn and concludes at night, while the book itself begins in one spring and ends with the next. The diurnal and seasonal patterns suggest cycles and a return to a new beginning, a reawakening or rebirth after the darkness of night or the chill of winter. Yet as night falls or winter descends and we are driven within the cabin, our belief in dawn or the spring is sorely tested. Thus, awareness of the cycles of nature is the only buttress man has against despair. Simplicity provides the discipline that allows man to get close enough to nature to see it truly.

But the primary symbol of the spiritual is Walden Pond itself. In the drama of its freezing and thawing is the rebirth of man. The pond lies at the center of the book (Chapter 9 of 18 in "The Ponds") and at the heart of Thoreau's journey toward the essential. It is beautiful, transparent, and deep. Though it is thought bottomless, Thoreau has sounded it. It is home for birds and fishes, and though men come there to fish, "they know nothing about the hook of hooks with which to angle for the pond itself" ("Higher Laws"). Walden is "earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature" ("The Ponds"), but in winter that eye closes, covered by ice.

Men came in winter to cut the blocks of ice, thinking to carry away Walden. What they found, however, was that ice must melt, and Walden "recovered the greater part" ("The Pond in Winter"). Walden's renewed fluidity previews the flow of spirit that creates life.

The most famous sentence in Walden speaks about the mass of men. When men are in mass they are lumps, undifferentiated matter; the flow of spirit is

alien to them. Like Walden gelled, they too are dead. Unlike the pond, they feel no thaw. Globs of laboring, acquisitive matter, they are quiet in their desperation because they are asleep to possibilities. There is no dawn in them, no morning sun. They are solid in bulk only, and light neither flows through nor emanates from them. But their lot is always remediable, Thoreau believes, if they will only heed the divinity within.

In its use of Walden Pond as a symbol for essential life and as dramatic hero, in the variety of its resurrection motives, in the multiple layers of metaphoric meaning, and especially in the creative use of language, Walden is a poem. Words, Thoreau knew, are congealed ideas. In his playful hands, however, they are restored to fluidity and life. The reader finds himself continually surprised, challenged, and delighted by the unexpected. As the pond refreshes the artist, so the artist refreshes the language. One of the last fables of Walden is that of the artist of Kouroo "who was disposed to strive after perfection." Like Thoreau, he went to the woods to create his masterpiece, "resolved that it should not be made of unsuitable material." When he had finished his task of love, the artist found that he "had made a new system...a world with full and fair proportions; in which, though the old cities and dynasties had passed away, fairer and more glorious ones had taken their places." Such is the achievement of Henry David Thoreau: "The material was pure, and his art was pure; how could the result be other than wonderful."

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

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Harding's The Days of Henry Thoreau (1965;1982) is the best and standard biography. It is calm, balanced, and factual. Also good is Joseph Wood Krutch's Henry David Thoreau (1948). Richard Lebeaux's Young Man Thoreau (1977) breaks new grounds in investigating its subject's psychological make-up.

Three book length studies of American literature deserve special mention: Leo Marx's The Machine in the Garden (1964), R.W.B. Lewis' The American Adam (1955), and pre-eminently F.O. Matthiessen's American Renaissance, the first study of Thoreau that concentrated on the organic structure of Walden.

Books on Thoreau of note include Sherman Paul's The Shores of America (1958) and Reginald Cook's Passage to Walden (1949).

Stanley Cavell's The Senses of Walden (1972) and Charles Anderson's The Magic Circle of Walden (1968) treat Thoreau's masterpiece exclusively and concentrate on his development as a "poet."

There are several excellent collections of essays on Thoreau including Thoreau: A Century of Criticism, ed. Harding (1964); The Recognition of Henry David Thoreau, ed. Wendell Glick (1969) which includes contemporary responses to Thoreau; two from the Twentieth Century series: Walden, ed. Richard Ruland (1968) and Thoreau, ed. S. Paul (1962). Here one will find virtually every significant article (including Joseph Moldenhauer's brilliant "Paradox in Walden") on Walden and "Civil Disobedience."

Finally, since no study of Thoreau can be successful without a thorough understanding of Transcendentalism, the following books are highly recommended: Matthiessen's American Renaissance; Lawrence Buell's Literary Transcendentalism (1973), the most lucid description of this complex philosophy; Critical Essays on American Transcendentalism, eds. Philip Gura and Joel Myerson (1982), an exhaustive compendium of writings by and about the leading figures of the movement. Finally any of several books by Perry Miller.

An excellent study of the differences between Emerson's and Thoreau's philosophies can be found in Joel Porte's Emerson and Thoreau: Transcendentalists in Conflict (1966).

Edward H. Madden's Civil Disobedience and Moral Law in Nineteenth-Century American Philosophy (1968) puts Thoreau's great essay in context and points up the controversy between the activists and self-reformers.

Herman Melville

1819 - 1891

Considered one of the 19th century's greatest novelists, Melville received limited attention in his own time and died in obscurity. He had little formal schooling but read widely. He first went to sea in 1837 and in the early 1840s jumped ship in the Marquesas Islands in the Pacific. He returned to the United States in 1844 and wrote Typee (1846) and Omoo (1847) based on his island adventures. These were well received. He married and settled in Pittsfield, Massachusetts where he wrote the classic Moby Dick (1851). Although today regarded as one of the greatest novels in American literature, it was not a popular success at the time of publication. Melville moved to New York City in 1863 and soon after became inspector of customs. In 1924, more than 30 years after his death, his novel of innocence and evil, Billy Budd, was published.

Synopsis Herman Melville

Moby Dick

Moby Dick is told to us by a man named Ishmael. Impelled by an urge to see the world and understand its mysteries, Ishmael travels to New Bedford, Massachusetts where he signs aboard the whaling ship Pequod.

Ahab, the ship's Captain, appears frequently during the voyage standing in one of the two holes drilled on the quarter deck for his peg leg of whalebone. He tells the crew that he has sworn to hunt the great whale, Moby Dick, that ripped his leg off on his last voyage. He tells them that the whale has a savage temper and that he seems to know what he is doing. As the Pequod sails across the Pacific, Ahab asks passing ships, "Hast thou seen the white whale?" The suspense builds. The Pequod runs into a typhoon, during which the mast heads glow with a mysterious electrical fire. In a weird ritual, Ahab claims to be the son of the fire and lightning. He challenges nature to do its worst to him.

The day after the storm, Ahab sights Moby Dick, thus gaining his own promised reward (a gold doubloon for the first man to sight the white whale). As the boats approach Moby Dick, he dives and comes up under Ahab's boat, biting it in half. The Pequod drives the whale off.

On the third day, Ahab harpoons the whale but is left to fight it alone. Moby Dick breaks loose from Ahab's boat, turns, and rams his big forehead under

the Pequod's bow. As it sinks, Ahab thrusts one last harpoon into Moby Dick, but the line catches him around the neck, and he is dragged into the sea.

One lone survivor, Ishmael, is rescued by the Rachel, which is out looking for survivors from its previous encounter with Moby Dick. The sea rolls on as it has for thousands of years, leaving no trace of ships, seamen, or the white whale.

Ishmael, Ahab, and the White Whale

by Leonard Engel
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Herman Melville's Moby Dick (1851) was published at the height of what F.O. Matthiessen calls The American Renaissance. Matthiessen dates this remarkable movement in American literature from the publication of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Nature in 1836 to the publication of Walt Whitman's first edition of Leaves of Grass in 1855. By any standard, this was a tremendous burst of literary energy which wasn't equaled--if even then--until the third and fourth decades of the 20th century, but more importantly, the significance of these literary works themselves was not appreciated or even clearly comprehended until much later. In fact, not until the 1950's did many, including Moby Dick, receive the kind of attention they deserved.

This twenty year period and the one immediately preceding it saw the opening of the West and the beginnings of a massive westward movement. The ideas implicit in the Manifest Destiny concept, such as self-reliance, independence, and rugged individualism, made Horace Greeley's admonition "go West, young man, go West; there lies your destiny" a vital sign of the times. The fledgling industries of the early years of the 19th century, with the help of major breakthroughs in technology, accelerated rapidly. Jacksonian Democracy made the common man view himself as truly unique. In short, Americans were beginning to realize the promises of America implicit in the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Constitution (1788).

By the 1830's the "enlightened" City of Light (of the 18th century Age of Reason) had come to earth, a New Eden filled with a multitude of untapped natural resources. The American became a new Adam,* Adam before the Fall, unhindered by the Preconceived concepts that limited or oppressed people in other societies, such as Original Sin, monarchy, tyranny, and the numerous strictures on people in countries having traditional culture and values. He saw himself, this American, as a new man in a new country, in St. Jean de Crevecoeur's words, "who acts upon new principles, (entertains) new ideas, and (forms) new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labor, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence. This is an American." All that was required was that he be "up and doing."

Undoubtedly, Americans were "doing;" they were up and on the move. Notice that the two outstanding works of the period (Moby Dick and Leaves of Grass) have as their major theme the journey motif. Even Thoreau, who traveled merely from Concord to Walden Pond, embraced the whole world while on the edge of that small body of water. This example from Walden clearly reflects the other major theme of the period, one's relationship with nature; it also reveals the importance of symbolism.

Thus, throughout the literature of this period--the American Renaissance--we see repeatedly images and symbols of newness, rebirth, new relationships, new identities, and they correspond closely with the optimism and hope of the time, with the dreams of a people who truly believe they are God's chosen, plunked down on His own virgin soil. Clearly, one sees in Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville much less optimism and exuberance, more doubt and skepticism, tragedy, a lot of irony, and a whole lot

*R.W.B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

of symbolism--the physical journey suggesting the spiritual journey.

Nowhere is symbolism more elaborately, systematically, or complexly presented than in Moby Dick. In fact, I believe that the entire book is so structured that Ishmael's journey aboard the Pequod is a metaphor for a spiritual journey that actually becomes a quest for new symbols. One senses the journey as metaphor almost immediately in the text when Ishmael, contrary to most of the rest of his countrymen who are on the move either westward to accumulate land or upward toward becoming captains of industry and increasing their material resources, power, and influence, travels East. He happily accepts the 300th Lay--a very low-wage indeed--while readily admitting to the reader that this was a poor way to accumulate a princely fortune. "But I am one of those that never take on about princely fortunes," he remarks, "and am quite content if the world is ready to board and lodge me." Clearly, Ishmael is out of step with the materialism of the time and rejects the move West, while heading East (the Orient had been gaining in popularity among the American Romantics, especially the Transcendentalists, as a source of inner wisdom and spiritual knowledge). Now Ishmael embarks on a four year whaling voyage that will supply only lodging and board and barely enough money to pay for the clothing he will wear out on it.

The reasons he gives are nebulous. He relates in the first paragraph:

> Call me Ishmael. Some years ago--never mind how long precisely--having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every

> funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately knocking people's hats off--then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me.

Recognizing the tone in this passage is crucial; in a casual, nonchalant voice with the offhand manner of the teller of folk tales, Ishmael implies some devastating reasons for embarking on such a voyage. First, he has nothing to interest him on shore--he is out of step with his "up and doing" generation. Second, being on land often causes him to have splenetic fits of anger and bouts of depression that, in time, might cause hostility, aggression, and even homicide, or, possibly, self-inflicted wounds resulting in suicide. These weighty matters cleary undercut the casual manner with which Ishmael relates them. They also reveal an attitude of mind. They seem, at the last, incongruous both to him and to this period of time in America. How could, one might ask, a young person with his obvious talents, his intelligence and his articulation, get so depressed and down on himself at this most optimistic moment in American history?

This question and a number of possible answers have been discussed, analyzed, and dissected repeatedly by students of Melville. According to James Baird in his book entitled Ishmael, Melville is dramatizing through Ishmael and the other principal characters in Moby Dick not only a disgust with the values and culture of his moment in America (and Western society in general), but a complete breakdown of those values, a cultural failure resulting in

Ishmael's case in depression, misanthropy, and sickness of soul, despite his casual manner of expression. This disillusionment and sense of loss were, perhaps, more poignant for the sensitive American in 1850 than for his comrades in other western countries. By 1850 a full half century after the Revolutionary War, the removal of British troops and mercenaries from our shores, and the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, with all their promises, hopes, and dreams for the future, it was clear to many that the promising future had not arrived yet, and worse still, might never arrive.

In short, the new democratic principles, instead of enlightening and uplifting, had a "leveling" effect, resulting in demagoguery and a general grubbing for power. The new, "enlightened" relationship among people and with nature resulted in chicanery and crass commercialism, a despoilation of nature, and a wasteful destruction of our natural resources. Finally, and probably most important for Melville, what was to be a new, inspiring, and more authentic relationship with God, articulated initially by the Puritans--who saw themselves as the Israelites in the Old Testament, the Chosen People of God going to the New and Promised Land--had become by 1850 a dry, sterile, uninspiring, if not monotonous, habit.

This, then, I believe, is the real reason for Ishmael's voyage, and it is profoundly related to Melville's own quest for significance and order in his life. To the extent that one sees Ishmael's survival at the end of the disastrous voyage as a positive statement, a glimmer of hope in an otherwise dark tale of revenge and obsession, to that extent one might equate Ishmael's quest with Melville's own quest for mental and spiritual health.

Recall, if you will, Ishmael's first words and the somber motifs of homicide and suicide; despite his dejected spirit, his tone is optimistic, and he could even be compared with the Transcendental side of the dichotomy described earlier, that is, with Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau. His positive values and approach to life certainly have an Emersonian ring to them. I believe, however, that Melville is

making Ishmael the spokesman for Emersonian ideas at the beginning of Moby Dick in an effort to test them, to put them in the context of real life situations and see how they fare, in effect, to put them up against Ahab and his values and see what happens to them. And, as we will see, Ishmael's values are overwhelmed, at least temporarily, by Ahab and his belief system. Early on, Ishmael professes his Christianity often, but it is a rather liberal, almost unitarian, Christianity. He attends Father Mapple's harsh, Old Testament-like sermon, but he also readily worships Queequeg's little idol, and he entertains what would be for the straitlaced Presbyterian of the time some heretical notions.

In short, he is open to experience. He is a free-floating ship on the high seas, one might say, looking for a meaningful, but not necessarily safe, harbor in which to cast his anchor. As one of our popular phrases has it, he is intent on keeping his options open, and he assuredly does this until he comes under Ahab's spell in the chapter called "The Quarter Deck."

In the "Quarter-Deck," Ahab whips the crew into a frenzy: starting with the harpooners, he manipulates until he has everyone, except Starbuck, vowing to chase Moby Dick to his death. Starbuck, Ahab must try to overpower with reason, but his "rational argument" so terrifies Starbuck that he is dumbfounded.

> All visible objects, man, are but pasteboard masks. But in each event--in the living act, the undoubted deed-there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps

> me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principle, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me.

This bit of inverted (and perverted) Platonism reveals something of his philosophic beliefs, and Starbuck is so shocked, he's speechless. According to Ahab, and not unlike Plato, physical objects, the material world, are not reality, at least not completely, but are merely the outer surfaces or layers hiding or protecting the inner reality of an object. If one will persist in finding truth, he must strike through the outer wall, and for Ahab the white whale is the wall shoved near to him. Thus, his pursuit of the white whale, started as a revenge motive in Ahab, has developed into a complex philosophy involving the nature of good and evil and, specifically, the questions of how a good God, presumably governing His Chosen in the new World and using His system of democracy, could allow for such a powerful, malicious, evil force in the form of Moby Dick not only to exist but to wreak the havoc that he does.

Some critics credit Ahab with the stature of a tragic-hero fighting the good fight against evil from Adam and the Fall down to the present, which view, I suppose, has a certain validity if one sees the whale as evil. Others have suggested that Ahab is a kind of Puritanic follower of the medieval heresy Manicheanism, which posits an eternal struggle between good and evil, a good God and an evil God. Whatever Ahab is or however one sees him, one must recognize the power of his personality and the compelling force of the symbols he uses to manipulate the crew. Even Ishmael is seduced and raises his consenting voice to the hunt for Moby Dick. To seal the crew's commitment, Ahab uses symbols both monetary and religious: he drives a Spanish doubloon into the mast--the prize for the first person to sight Moby Dick--and he draws a measure of grog from

the great barrel, insisting that everyone drink from the "goblet-end" of "the murderous chalices," of the harpoons, which he hopes to use in killing the white whale. After this highly ritualized, pagan communion, Ahab stumbles away to his cabin, exhausted.

In the following chapter, "The Sunset," in the privacy of his cabin, Ahab candidly reveals to himself and the reader the extent of his madness. He is not mad, he insists, but "demoniac," "madness maddened! That wild madness that's only calm to comprehend itself!" It is also worth noting here that in this chapter, Ahab establishes the series of rejections that continue to the very end of the hunt. This series involves Ahab's rejections of many of the common symbols associated with society and western civilization. The series culminates with Ahab's rejection of his fellow human beings (The Rachel) and finally his rejection of resurrection and life everlasting (The Delight). In the "Sunset," Ahab bids farewell to one of the more beautiful aspects of nature, especially at sea--the sunset. He will no longer allow himself to be soothed by such peaceful beauty, and he concludes the chapter with a restatement of his commitment to hunt Moby Dick to his death, using as symbolic imagery the new language of modern technology.

As indicated earlier, Ishmael, along with the rest of the crew, is drawn into Ahab's obsession by consenting to hunt Moby Dick. However, Ishmael has a change of heart and withdraws his consent, which might be the reason for his salvation at the end, or as some critics say--his deliverance. Ishmael's reversal is related to his experiences in two specific chapters, "The Grand Armada" and "The Try-Works."

In the "Grand Armada," the Pequod comes upon what Melville calls an armada of whales, and the whale boats are lowered to try to kill some of them. Starbuck's boat, manned by Ishmael and Queequeg, among others, finds itself trapped within a huge circle several miles in diameter of male whales who are splashing and dangerously churning up the water. As the boat drifts through other inner circles of

whales (for safety they refrain from throwing the harpoon), they eventually approach the center of these massive circles, and as they do, they find it calm and peaceful--with the stillness of a lake and "to a considerable depth exceedingly transparent." "Like household dogs," Ishmael relates, the whales, mostly cows and calves, come snuffling around them, while Queequeg pats their heads and Starbuck scratches their backs with his lance. They then discover, at the very center, in the clear, watery depths, baby whales just recently born and beginning to nurse, and a pregnant whale about to give birth. It's a strange, beautiful, unreal scene to the men in the boat--one they've never experienced before and completely antithetic to the business of whaling. It's a perfect picture of the harmony of nature and the beauty of creation.

The chapter that actually moves Ishmael to renounce Ahab's quest, "The Try-Works," takes place during the night after the Pequod killed a whale. The crew is "trying out" the blubber or boiling it down to oil, and Ishmael is at the helm, steering the ship by the compass; in front of him are the fires from the "works." Tending the fires are the harpooners, described as wild and uncivilized, and Melville records their activities, their talk, and especially their laughter in Satanic imagery.

Gradually, as the hours wear on, Ishmael dozes off and suddenly awakens to find himself turned around, facing the stern, and the ship on the verge of capsizing. He quickly regains control and prevents a near disaster, but the lesson is obvious.

> Look not too long in the face of the fire. O man! Never dream with thy hand on the helm! Turn not thy back to the compass; accept the first hint of the hitching tiller; believe not the artificial fire, when its redness makes all things look ghastly. Give not thyself up, then, to fire, lest it invert thee, deaden thee; as for the time it did me.

I read this not merely as a reference to Ishmael's having fallen asleep at the tiller, but to

his having come under Ahab's spell. He now disengages from Ahab's quest, just as he disengages from the fire, having learned an invaluable lesson. I believe it is this disengagement that saves his life at the end when that vehicle of death, Queequeg's coffin, pops up after the Pequod has gone down in the vortex created by Moby Dick.

The coffin, symbolizing the death experience, remember, is completely covered with representative carvings of Queequeg's tattoos. Since tattoos in Polynesian culture were outer manifestations of the inner person, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Queequeg's innate goodness and nobility do not perish with him, but are mystically embodied in the coffin and then transmitted to Ishmael as part of his symbolic rebirth. In other words, I see in this final scene, not only Ishmael's symbolic death but also the final phase of a symbolic descent into the underworld that began with the voyage. Some might even argue that it began in the first paragraph of the text with Ishmael's talk of funerals and coffin warehouses. In this sense, Ishmael may represent a modern version of the epic hero, a nineteenth century Odysseus, out of sorts with his time, his culture, and himself at the outset of the voyage. Like Odysseus, Ishmael is away from home, figuratively, and desperately trying to return to the harmony, peace, and selfhood that the Greek ethos symbolized. But unlike Odysseus, Ishmael is "home," though, as I've indicated, he's dissatisfied and, ironically, must leave it in order to find selfhood and meaning in his life, to discover new, more vital symbols. His initial commitment and subsequent disengagement from Ahab's mad obsession leave him without commitment and further isolate him from the crew. He, alone, survives, but the final image Melville presents, that of Ishmael floating on the coffin for a day and a half in the middle of the ocean with not a sail or solitary soul around and little or no control over his existence, is a frightening one. It's as though Ishmael is doomed to live in a world that holds little meaning for him, one from which he is irrevocably estranged. What a marvelous and terrifying image this is to anticipate the existentialism and nihilism that twentieth century literature would dramatize.

After a day and a half of floating on the coffin, Ishmael is discovered and picked up by the ship Rachel, which is, herself, searching for her missing children, but as Ishmael says, "She only found another orphan." "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee," Ishmael, quoting Job, concludes while "the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago."

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Harriet Beecher Stowe:
Uncle Tom's Cabin:
A Reconsideration For Our Time

Harriet Beecher Stowe

1811 - 1896

American writer and abolitionist, born in Litchfield, Connecticut. Harriet married the Reverend Calvin Stowe, an ardent opponent of slavery. In 1852 the book that earned her wide and enduring fame was published--Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among the Lowly, a forceful indictment of slavery. It did much to crystalize militant anti-slavery sentiment in the North and therefore was an important factor in precipitating the American Civil War.

Uncle Tom's Cabin, like most of her novels, is rambling in structure, but rich in pathos and dramatic incident. In 1853 she issued, as an addendum to her story, A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin, containing an impressive array of documentary evidence in support of her attack upon the institution of slavery.

Synopsis Harriet Beecher Stowe

Uncle Tom's Cabin

The novel opens on Arthur Shelby's Kentucky Plantation a few years before the Civil War. Shelby, who is not a cruel slave owner, has incurred serious debts and must sell his slaves. Mr. Haley, a villainous Southern slave trader, buys Uncle Tom, Shelby's most loyal slave, and little Harry, a talented five year old child. Eliza, Harry's mother, takes the child one night, and stops at Uncle Tom's cabin to convince him to run away with her to Canada via the underground railroad. Eliza's husband, George, has already fled to Canada. Tom feels, however, that he must remain with his master. Eliza and Harry flee to the Ohio River and jump from one ice slab to another with Haley in pursuit. They are assisted ashore by a man who loathes slave dealers. He makes arrangements for them to get to Canada.

Haley returns to the Shelby's plantation and takes Tom to New Orleans on a steam boat. Aboard the ship, Tom meets a beautiful child named Eva St. Clare whose gift is the seeing of good in everyone. She convinces her father to buy Tom and take him to the St. Clare's plantation. Her father agrees. Eva's loveable nature changes a little black girl. She convinces "Topsy" that she is not a scamp but a good child. Eva dies and her father is killed in a brawl in a cafe before he could free Tom. Tom is bought by the infamous slave trader, Simon Legree, who beats his slaves until they drop.

Tom, who is a fierce pacifist, soon dies from Legree's inhuman treatment. Mr. Shelby sees that he has a decent burial and returns to his plantation to free his remaining slaves.

Eliza, little Harry, and her husband travel to Liberia. Topsy goes to Vermont to live with Mr. St. Clare's sister. Stowe concludes the novel with a long chapter about the cruel and unchristian institution of slavery.

Harriet Beecher Stowe
Uncle Tom's Cabin:
A Reconsideration For Our Time

by Jordon Pecile
U.S. Coast Guard Academy

It is one of the ironies of our educational system that the American novel that has had the most significant impact on the politics, history, and literature of our country is a book hardly anyone reads or teaches anymore.

And it is an even deeper irony that, as Alex Haley pointed out a decade ago, "The name of the hero of the work that did more than anything else to bring about the end of slavery has become the worst insult the slaves' descendants can call each other today, out of their frustration in seeking what all white Americans take for granted."

Though critics as different as Edmund Wilson (writing in the New Yorker in 1948 the now famous essay entitled, "No! No! No! My Soul Ain't Yours, Mas'r") and Leslie Fiedler (writing in What Was Literature?) have called Uncle Tom's Cabin the greatest American novel of protest ever written, many educators have shied away from teaching the work, and an increasing number of our students, both white and black, not knowing the novel, have come to associate the name of Uncle Tom with the kind of dehumanized individual who accepts enslavement without a struggle--a white man's white-haired shuffling toady. Innocently--or ignorantly--unaware of the true nature of Harriet Beecher Stowe's nineteenth century

masterpiece, our students today see in Uncle Tom only the symbol of a black man who betrays his people by his constant and devoted servitude--an obsequious, mealy-mouthed servant of any master, a "handkerchief head" who lets himself be beaten to death while all the time praying for his master's soul.

This burdensome misconception is bound to continue at large in the country until teachers unafraid of argument bring the book back into the secondary school system where it belongs and let students read and experience for themselves life in the South before the Civil War, a world--not so unlike our own today--in which human suffering and certain social evils were enshrined in Law.

Uncle Tom's Cabin has always been a controversial novel, but until our time it has never gone unread or been ignored. Since the appearance of the first installment on June 5, 1851, in the abolitionist weekly The National Era, it has had its detractors and its defenders, and its detractors have always been louder. In general, the critical battles over the book have centered on Stowe's portrayal of the black characters, especially Uncle Tom and Topsy. Professor Thomas Gossett, of Wake Forest University, has just recently published his Herculean study of Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, and he has divided the criticism and the censuring of Harriet Beecher Stowe's work into two phases: "The earlier criticism of Stowe had usually been that she had portrayed black characters, and especially Uncle Tom, too favorably; and after World War II she was censured for not having portrayed them favorably enough."

The earlier criticism of the novel often took the form of vicious ad hominem attacks on the writer herself. Typical of the reviews which greeted the first book publication following serialization in The National Era was this one in the New Orleans Crescent:

> Mrs. Stowe is part quack and part cut-throat. There never before was anything so detestable or so monstrous among women as this. Men, often barbarous and bloody,

> have sometimes been known to preach like this, but never until now did a female so far forget all the sweet and social instincts of her sex, as to do what Mrs. Stowe has done--endeavor to whet the knife of domestic murder and shake over the innocent head of every matron, maid, and babe in the South, the blazing torch of midnight conflagration, the brutal and merciless instruments of death, that are struck to the heart or dash out the brains of the sleeping or the helpless, in the bursting out of an insurrection.

Or this one, written by a woman for the New Orleans Picayune:

> Before reading this novel I had been somewhat inclined to sympathize with some of the supposed wrongs of women--to advocate for a little more freedom for them. Now, however, I would promise to obey my husband more loudly, were we to be married over again. It is the women's rights movement that has unsexed in great measure the female mind, and the result is this dirty book written by the man Harriet.

William Gilmore Simms, himself a popular author of Southern novels, had this to say in the Southern Quarterly Review:

> This Mrs. Stowe betrays a malignity so remarkable that the petticoat lifts of itself, and we see the hoof of the beast under the table.

The visceral response to the novel both in the North and in the South sometimes took more violent forms than gutsy critical writing in the daily papers. Stones were thrown through the windows of the Stowe home in Brunswick, Maine, while in Charlottesville, Virginia, students of the University of Virginia held a bonfire and public burning of the book. In Athens, Georgia, students and other vigilantes burned box after box of the books in the center of the city. And in Mobile, Alabama, a bookseller silly or greedy enough to display a copy of the novel in his window was run out of town.

Yet within days after its appearance in book form in March of 1852, the first 10,000 copies were sold--an unheard of number in those years. There were three different editions to suit different purchasers: a paperback copy which sold for one dollar, a cloth binding which sold for a dollar and a half, and a gilt-edged edition which went for two dollars. All were sold out and by June the presses were running nights as well as days to keep up with the demand, which had reached 10,000 copies a week.

By the end of the year, 300,000 copies had been sold, many of them to lending libraries who had to buy dozens of volumes to borrowers' requests. Uncle Tom's Cabin became the best seller of the nineteenth century, selling more than any other book except the Bible, and it was stated at the time that there were at least ten readers for every copy sold. A reviewer in the New York Literary World observed that in the North it was popular with every age, every kind of reader:

> No condition is exempt: lords and ladies, flunkies, and kitchen-maids are equally infected with the rage. The prevailing affection is universal, and all have Uncle Tom's Cabin, whether at rest or in motion, at leisure or at work, on the rail or in the idle repose of the parlor, or in the busy bustle of the kitchen.

There were, in those days as there are today, tie-ins, and the burgeoning souvenir industry accommodatingly supplied all sorts of replicas of Uncle Tom, Topsy, and little Eva, in the form of candles, or porcelain figurines, chinaware, silver spoons, salt and pepper shakers, bookends, puzzles, cards, and games, including a plantation game that involved bringing together members of the same black families who had been separated by slave auctions.

And then, as now, came the dramatizations. It has been estimated that for every one reader of the novel, there were ten who saw the play. It was probably the play more than the novel that made millions of Northerners abolitionists--especially those who couldn't read. And others who wouldn't under ordinary circumstances be caught dead in a theater--because theaters were places where the impious and the sinful gathered and Satan held sway--flocked in to see George K. Aiken's dramatic version of Mrs. Stowe's story. Aiken's adaptation--completed without Stowe's permission and against her wishes--was a long evening in the theater, consisting of thirty scenes in six acts. It opened in Troy, New York, in November of 1852, only eight months after the publication of the novel, and it ran for one hundred nights in that city of 30,000 before moving to New York City. To accommodate the crowds in Manhattan, matinee performances were introduced, ladies unaccompanied by gentlemen were admitted to the theater, and, in the words of one playbill of the period:

> A neat and comfortable parquette has been installed near the pit for black patrons. They will be admitted to see this play and will be seated in a place where they can both hear and see.

"O," wrote a wag at that time, "It was a sight worth seeing, to see those ragged, coatless men and boys in the pit cheering the strongest and sublimest anti-slavery sentiments!"

"The whole audience was melted to tears," wrote another, "and I own that I was no exception. The audience, after witnessing the death of Uncle Tom,

left the theater as gravely as people leaving a church."

Indeed, a good cry was what it was all about, tears and strong feelings aroused at the sight of black families being separated by penurious plantation owners, black women being forced to flee from hired slave catchers and their relentless blood hounds, and Uncle Tom, the best of Christians, being flagellated like Christ until, like Christ, he dies forgiving his tormentors. Floods of tears were shed too, nightly, over the dying of little Eva, who expires while so young and so good, and who, with her last breath, charges her father to take action against slavery.

But this arousal of excessive emotion was not an end in itself, not in the melodrama and not in the novel. The nation in which Uncle Tom's Cabin takes place was supposed to be a nation ruled by a Christian God, and yet how could a good God tolerate such an injustice as slavery, which treats human beings as chattel, separates husbands from wives and children from parents, condemns anyone with a drop of black blood to perpetual servitude, allows the good to be beaten to death and the wicked to triumph? It was Harriet Beecher Stowe's avowed intention in writing the novel to draw an unforgettable picture of the reality of human suffering under slavery, and by doing so to lead men to take action, even arms, against "that patriarchal and peculiar institution."

> The time has come [she wrote to Gamaliel Bailey, publisher of The National Era, on March 8, 1851] when even a woman who can speak a word for freedom and humanity is bound to speak . . . and I hope every woman who can write will not be silent. My vocation is simply that of a painter, and my object will be to hold up in the most lifelike and graphic manner possible the dreaded institution of slavery, its reverses and changes, and the Negro character, which I have had ample opportunities for studying.

> There is no arguing with pictures, and everyone is impressed with them, whether they meant to be or not.

And impressed they were. Uncle Tom's Cabin, said a senator of the time, "made two millions of abolitionists" and was the chief force in developing support for the Republican Party. "The great influence of Mrs. Stowe's book," wrote an historian of the Civil War, "was shown in bringing home to the hearts of people the conviction that slavery was an injustice; and indeed, the impression it made upon bearded men was not so powerful as its appeal to women and boys." After all, schoolboys who joined in the family reading of the novel in the 1850's were the voters and the volunteers in 1861.

Legend--and it may also be truth--has it that Harriet Beecher Stowe was moved to write her novel by a vision she had during a communion service she was attending in the First Parish Church of Maine one bitterly cold February morning. The text for the service was the Book of Matthew, Chapter 25: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it to me." Bowing her head, she was overcome suddenly by a vision of an old white-haired slave being brutally beaten to death. Stowe has left us this account of her experience.

> I saw it as plain as day, as plain as I see you now. There was an old slave, with white wool, clothed in rags--a gentle, Christian man, like Josiah Henson--Father Henson, whom I had met in Boston--and he was being flogged to death by the ruffian who owned him--such a man as that overseer Brother Charles once met on the New Orleans boat, the man with a fist hardened, as he said to Charles, "by knocking down niggers. Hard as iron," he said, "and I don't bother with the sick niggers but work them in with the crop." I saw this brute, too cowardly to do the murderous work

> of whipping by himself, ordering two degraded slaves, ragged and dirty as their victim, to lay on the whips. The lashes fell, the ebony skin broke, and blood as red as any white man's flowed from the stripes. And as he died, that black saint prayed the Lord's forgiveness for his torturers.

Again, the legend has it that Stowe stumbled home from the communion service and in a sort of trance wrote down the scene as it had come to her in church. She wrote, on the back of a brown paper bag, the memorable death of Uncle Tom--and in doing so, gave birth to the book that divided families and the nation itself, and, as Lincoln said sadly, "started this great war."

From the first, three scenes in the novel and later in the Tom Plays captured the public imagination--the scene of the runaway slave Eliza braving the ice flows of the Ohio River while clutching her boy to her breast in order to save him from being taken from her and sold down river; the untimely death of little Eva; and the beating and sacrificial death of Uncle Tom. Stowe's detractors have argued that they are scenes that pander to "the mass audience's need for sadomasochistic titillation and righteous indignation;" her defenders have argued that they are true "pictures" of the hard facts of our cruel society and they reveal the reality of innocent suffering in an unjust world. Her detractors return with the argument that Tom's Christ-like forgiveness belittles his manhood and represents his submissive and dutiful nature, and they quote his dying words:

> Mas'r if you was sick, or in trouble, or dying, and I could save ye, I'd give ye my heart's blood; and if taking every drop of blood in this poor old body would save your precious soul, I'd give 'em freely, as the Lord gave his for me. O, Mas'r! don't bring this great sin on your soul.

> It will hurt you more than 't will me! Do the worst you can, my troubles'll be over soon; but, if ye don't repent, yours won't never end.

Her defenders respond that yes, Stowe does believe in the redemptive quality of suffering, and that she remained enough of a Calvinist in the Beecher and Stowe tradition to believe that human suffering is ultimately insignificant since it will eventually be compensated by eternal happiness.

But Tom's passive resistance to Legree's brutalities is not the only or recommended course of action in the novel. The novel is in fact made up of two equally important story lines, both of which begin when the debt-ridden plantation owner Shelby is forced to sell two of his slaves--Uncle Tom, and little Harry, son of Eliza and George. From that starting point, one strand of the novel follows the escape of George, Eliza and little Harry, with George offering armed resistance along the way until he is safely reunited with his wife and son in Canada. The other strand of the novel follows Tom as he is transported down the Mississippi and eventually ends up being sold to that worst of slave owners, the Vermont native, Simon Legree. Tom's Christian forbearance in all his adversity, and his refusal to betray the whereabouts of the runaway slaves Cassie and Emmeline, lead only to his suffering and death.

Thus the novel does depict choices--armed resistance versus passive resistance--choices that have come down to our time in the persons of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King.

That the novel realizes the creation of a George as fully as it does a Tom is often forgotten today, largely because the book is misunderstood since it remains unread and untaught. Only two years ago, a new dramatization of the novel prepared for the Spider's Web series of radio programs for teenagers was announced by public radio station WGBH. Response to the announcement was so negative that WGBH cancelled the six programs, and they have not to this day been broadcast. And not too many years ago, a new musical version of the novel was banned from

trying out in Bridgeport and in New Haven by a coalition of clergymen, leaders of the NAACP, and representatives of labor unions. They argued that Uncle Tom's Cabin "portrayed only the weaknesses of a racial minority and continued to hold up for ridicule people who in their earlier days of settlement were unfortunately subject to conditions which would now be considered atrocious."

The two most significant denunciations of Stowe and her novel come from James Baldwin in his essay "Everybody's Protest Novel," and J.C. Furnas, a white critic, in his book Goodbye to Uncle Tom. Baldwin's essay has been very influential in diverting readers from the novel. Published in 1949, it has dealt a blow from which the novel has not yet recovered.

> Uncle Tom's Cabin is a very bad novel, having, in its self-righteous virtues, sentimentality, much in common with Little Women. Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always there--for the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty.

Baldwin goes on to argue that Stowe created only stock characters in her novel, that her blacks are "virtual whites in black face who reinforce harmful images." Tom, he says, is a figure "robbed of his humanity and divested of his sex," an impossible paragon of virtue whom blacks are supposed to emulate.

Furnas, in Goodbye to Uncle Tom, goes beyond Baldwin in his denunciation of the novel. He calls Stowe "the Negro's worst enemy" for fastening on them degrading racial stereotypes which have handicapped their progress in America. In the ultimate of ironies, he piles up charges of racism against the

one writer in the nineteenth century who was honest and daring enough to struggle with the nature and the problems of prejudice. While it may be true that by today's standards there are racist elements in Stowe's characterizations of Topsy and of Tom, and the other black characters, we must not forget that Stowe was writing in another era, and that her book was revolutionary for its day. Tom was the first black man in American literature--and in American drama--to be shown to have dignity and integrity and pride, and to be capable of superhuman forbearance in the tradition of the Savior. Like the Savior, he became a martyr for his people. Though this behavior may be unacceptable to many today, we owe it to history and literature to consider the novel in the context of the time in which it was written. Let us bring an historical perspective to our literary judgment and inform our students of this masterpiece. We need to reconsider what we have too long misunderstood.

Privileged and Imperiled Youth: Huck Finn and Mark Twain Resist Adulthood

Samuel Langhorne Clemens

(Mark Twain)

1835 - 1910

American writer and humorist, born in Florida, Missouri. When he was four, his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri. He was apprenticed to a Hannibal printer and later wrote for the Hannibal Journal. Later, he became a riverboat captain. In 1861 he served briefly in the Civil War in the Confederate Army. At various times he was a printer, miner, riverboat pilot, reporter, writer, and lecturer. In 1865 his story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" was published in New York and he became well known. He traveled to Europe and the Holy Land and recorded these adventures in The Innocents Abroad, 1869. In 1871 he moved to Hartford, Connecticut where he wrote most of his great works, including The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, 1876; The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, 1884; and A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, 1889. In all, he wrote over 20 major works.

Synopsis Mark Twain

Huck Finn

A sequel to the picturesque Adventures of Tom Sawyer, but as Huck says, "it ain't no matter" if the reader has not read the earlier work. Huck narrates his experiences, which begin with his residence with the Widow Douglas. Huck escapes from this confinement, and his mean father, and starts down the Mississippi River on a raft with Jim, a runaway slave. Along the way Huck witnesses a murder and helps settle a false claim to Jim's ownership. The novel ends as it began, with Huck feeling the need to escape because Aunt Sally, just as Widow Douglas earlier, wants to "sivilize" him.

Many themes run through the novel and, although Twain ironically warns readers that they will be persecuted if they attempt to "find a motive...or a moral" in the novel, the many themes in the novel can be understood by mature readers. The conflict between society and the individual becomes increasingly important as the novel develops. As narrator, Huck reports events directly without commenting on them. At the same time his failure to see the incongruity of conflicting elements forms the basis of much of Twain's humor.

Privileged and Imperiled Youth: Huck Finn and Mark Twain Resist Adulthood

by Thomas Grant
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Sam Clemens was forced by poverty to abandon his boyhood and assume the duties of adulthood. He tried his hand at several vocations--printing, piloting, and then prospecting--before turning to writing--and that only in desperation. Although he became famous (and rich) as Mark Twain, Sam Clemens needed a subject that might sustain an author, not just serve a humorist. He soon found that subject in that part of his own life that poverty and misfortune had deprived him of--his boyhood. For Clemens, boyhood became that timeless moment between childhood and adulthood when a boy is free of obligations and can enjoy playing games with other boys. Twain discovered his boyhood past spent in the rural ante-bellum South just when Sam Clemens was establishing himself, in the later 1860's, as the hugely successful author in urban industrial New England, first in Buffalo and then in Hartford, Connecticut. The complicated and consuming duties required of a rich suburban squire and rising literary celebrity sharpened the disparity between the burdens of adulthood and the remembered pleasures of boyhood. Adulthood meant work, the drudgery that Clemens had always hated, while boyhood represented play, the life of adventure he had savored fitfully as a young man on the Mississippi and out West. Adulthood meant submission to moral and social codes, while boyhood preserved the independence of the

imagination and also private conscience. Adulthood required conformity and compromise while boyhood released the best of natural instincts, such as compassion and love. The conflict between freedom and restraint, so central in much of Twain's writings, was first given literary shape in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876) and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885). Both books celebrate the unfettered freedom of boyhood and expose the limitations of adult society that seeks to impose restraints on adolescent behavior.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn apparently began as a sequel to The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, as the title implies. But it lacked a proper hero. In a letter to William Dean Howells written during the summer of 1875, Twain said: "By and by I shall take a boy of twelve and run him on through life (in the first person) but not Tom Sawyer--he would not be a good character for it." Tom certainly does seem unsuitable since by the end of his book, he has become the respectable leader of a gang of other respectable mischief-makers, so he is not likely to venture far from the safety of his immediate neighborhood--especially since he has a fat bank account making 6% interest. Besides, Tom needs to stick around because an essential ingredient of his fun is savoring the discomfort of his victims.

Huck Finn, of course, is well suited to be "run through life." He has already endured hardship living like a tramp. He has not read Tom's adventure books and romances, so he does not have Tom's fanciful imagination. He does, however, have a well-developed fear of the real world. He is also forthright and direct, which may have been the reason Twain allowed such a boy to tell his story "in the first person." In the first paragraph, Huck declares that in Tom Sawyer "Mr. Mark Twain...told the truth mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth." Huck seems to imply that he will give all the facts--and tell not "mainly the truth" but the whole truth.

The contrast between Tom's world of self-indulgent fantasy and Huck's hard world of fact is apparent in the beginning. On the first gang outing, Tom promises an attack by a caravan of Arabs,

camels and elephants, which turns out to be nothing but a Sunday school picnic. Huck and the rest resign from the gang, but Tom has a ready explanation for the discrepancies: "it was all done by enchantment." Huck still wants to believe, so he puts Tom's explanation to the test. Following Tom's remarks about the magical properties of a tin lamp and an iron ring, Huck acquires both and "went out in the woods and rubbed the tin lamp till I sweat like an Injun, calculating to build a palace and sell it; but it warn't no use, none of the genies come. So then I judged that all that stuff was only just one of Tom Sawyer's lies. I reckoned he belived in the A-rabs and the elephants, but as for me I think different. It had all the marks of a Sunday school."

Huck thus begins his story in a state of disenchantment. His fall from innocence is accelerated by the rank deceitfulness of his father, who has returned to claim his half of the treasure. As soon as he sees signs of his presence, Huck runs to Judge Thatcher and gives up his fortune, so that, as he tells the judge, he "won't have to tell no lies." Huck is willing to endure the Widow's "sivilizing" restraints in order to maintain his freedom, but the brutalizing claims of an uncivilized father wrenches him rudely from the easy life he expected as Tom's obliging playmate. To escape imprisonment in Pap's cabin, Huck stages the bloody spectacle of his own death. In the truly menacing environment of the sequel to Tom Sawyer, Huck must not only relinquish his fortune but abandon his identity.

When he reaches freedom on Jackson's Island, he feels life starting over, like Adam reborn in paradise: "I was boss of it; it all belonged to me, so to say, and I wanted to know all about it." But the joys of solitude soon begin to clash with a boy's desire for companionship. When he discovers that Miss Watson's Jim is on the island, he is glad to find someone who won't put troublesome restrictions on him. They are, of course, kin--both outcasts escaping from enslavement, but at this point Huck is not aware of any deeper relationship. Huck begins to recognize his kinship with Jim only after they are forced to abandon their easy paradise, leaving Tom Sawyer's playground for good and casting themselves

to chance upon the mighty Mississippi. After they pass St. Louis on their makeshift raft, they come across a steamboat run aground and, at first, Huck regards the discovery as worthy of a Tom Sawyer intrigue: "He's call it an adventure...and he'd land on that wreck if it was his last act. And wouldn't he throw style into it?" Huck, not Tom, is the boy of proven style. He deftly evades the gang of robbers he discovers inside and, because of his quick thinking, they end up with the skiff full of plunder the gang had stolen. But when he finds that the robbers' lives are actually in danger, his heart goes out to them spontaneously. He is disposed to be compassionate because the crisis he has witnessed--a robber about to be killed by his own gang--duplicates his own staged murder earlier: "I begun to think how dreadful it was, even for murderers, to be in such a fix. I says to myself, there ain't no telling but I might come to be a murderer myself."

Huck's identification with life's victims anticipates his recognition of Jim as a human being equally worthy of compassion, which surfaces just as they approach the mouth of the Ohio and Jim's bid for freedom seems achievable. Huck and Jim become separated from each other in a fog and Huck's attempts to catch the raft in the skiff proves futile. When they are reunited, Huck exploits his resurrection by convincing Jim that in the fog, the separation was all a dream. Jim begins to doubt his own reality and Huck persists in flaunting its actuality. Jim shames Huck for telling a lie and Huck replies: "It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger--but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither. I didn't do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn't done that one if I'd a knowed it would make him feel that way." Huck's remorse opens him, however, to a moral conflict, pitting his acquired conscience against his instinctual compassion. Conscience, the stern voice of the official culture, rises up to shame him:

> Conscience says to me, "what had poor Miss Watson done to you that you could see her nigger sold off right under your eyes and never say one single word? What did

> that poor old woman do to you, that you could treat her so mean? Why, she tried to learn you your book, she tried to learn you your manners, she tried to be good to you every way she knowed how. That's what she done."

Countering Conscience is Jim, praising Huck for assuring him his freedom and calling him "de ole true Huck; de on'y white genlman dat ever kep' his promise to ole Jim."

Just at the point when Huck recognizes Jim as kin, thus silencing the voice of Conscience for the moment, Twain put aside the manuscript and turned to other projects. Perhaps he recognized the dilemma he had created. Jim's freedom requires his reunion with his family up the Ohio River, itself a questionable possibility in a region divided between free and slave states. But Huck's freedom consists in living easy and requires that he remain apart from society. Perhaps the impasse betrays Twain's unwillingness to bring a boy face-to-face with so controversial, or so adult, a moral decision. Thus, a steamboat comes out of nowhere at the end of chapter 16, smashes through the raft and when Huck emerges from his dive under the paddlewheel, he is alone. The Grangerford episode looks like a fresh start followed by Huck's reunion with Jim, after which the narrative movement is no longer dictated by the reasonable if risky plan of Jim's escape but by the easy, peaceful life floating down the Mississippi. Having thrown his characters upon the currents, Twain restructures the narrative action as an oscillation between two modes of experience, that represented by the river, connoting freedom, and that represented by the shore, connoting slavery, bondage to "civilized" restraints. The new scheme allowed Twain to postpone the question of Huck's moral conflict and instead deploy him primarily as the naive observer of adult folly, hypocrisy, greed and violence--the darker aspects of his boyhood experience filtered out in Tom Sawyer.

Following the Grangerford episode, and back on the river, Huck, resurrected once again and reunited with Jim, tries to return to the free and easy life, purified at last of complication. But their river

idyl is only the negative freedom of perpetual escape. Just how temporary and dissatisfying it is becomes immediately apparent when predators from shore invade their humble premises. Both Jim's bid for freedom and Huck's desire to remain free become subordinated to the adventures of the Duke and the King, during which Jim is kept hidden and Huck is reduced to being their "valley."

As long as the Duke and the King limit themselves to fleecing fools along the river who deserve it, Huck plays along, as he did in Tom's company. But when the two frauds try to bilk the daughters of the deceased Peter Wilks out of their fortune farther downriver, Huck is forced out of his servitude to respond to his feelings of compassion. Huck's reawakened sense of shame coincides with our recognition, not apparent to Huck, that the girls' plight--they have been orphaned by the death of a father--is identical to his own. Even the amount of the inheritance the con men seek, $6,000, is exactly the forture Huck relinquished back in St. Petersburg, to preserve his freedom and avoid telling "lies." Huck's assertiveness on behalf of victims like himself suggests that he is being prepared to face at last his moral opposition over harboring a runaway slave, so long held in abeyance. Complications arising from Huck's machinations offer a breakthrough when the Duke and the King must flee without the money, forcing Jim's sale to the Silas Phelps farm downriver in Pikeville, Huck must now grapple with the consequences of his commitment to Jim. The polar oposition in the middle episodes of the book between river and shore, freedom and bondage, becomes a division now within Huck's own mind, between his intuitive self and his acquired conscience.

Huck finally acknowledges Jim no longer as slave or servant but as father and brother. Then he caps his commitment by announcing, "all right, then, I'll go to hell."

Huck's decision to damn himself to save Jim is the emotional climax of the book, and sets the stage for Huck's most challenging escape, stealing Jim from the Phelps farm. But just when Huck is resolved to throw his lot in with a slave forever, Twain balks

again, just as he did when Huck and Jim approached the Ohio. Instead, he reintroduces Tom Sawyer, who seizes Huck's plan and turns the freeing of Jim into an elaborate adventure tricked up from his books. Twain seems to have written himself into a tight corner, as Huck might say. Since Huck and Jim have drifted deep into slave territory, freeing a slave seems hardly possible.

Instead, a boy's "run through life" in Twain's original conception simply stalls, leading nowhere. The Phelps farm where the book ends, though 1100 miles downriver from St. Petersburg, is, in Twain's imagination, very near the starting point of Huck's and Jim's journey. It is his fictional rendering of the farm of his uncle, John Quarles, 30 miles inland from Hannibal, where he spent summers as a boy. Perhaps, Sam Clemens, southerner and descendant of a slave-holding family, or Mark Twain, northern transplant and successful author of children's books, could not finally face the disturbing consequence unleashed by Huck's extraordinary moral bravery, and thus took the easy way out, resolving the book's complications in the Good Bad Boy fashion of Tom Sawyer.

Huck himself is burdened with his creator's reluctance to proceed, as if fearful of what he would sooner avoid than face. Huck decides to wing it, like the author of this very book: "I went right along, not fixing up any particular plan, but just trusting to Providence to put the right words in my mouth when the time come." At this moment, the character who has accepted adult obligations inexplicably vanishes as Sally Phelps rechristens him with a new name. "It's Tom Sawyer!" she bellows. Huck is thoroughly relieved: "if they was joyful, it warn't nothing to what I was: for it was like being born again." Huck's assumption of Tom's name enables him to explain his presence at the Phelps farm, but it also reveals that Huck, or at least the revived boy in him, really wants what Tom Sawyer has, the freedom to live a boy's carefree life in a respectable environment. Tom, of course, has no commitment to Jim, for he knows what Huck does not--that Miss Watson has set Jim free--and won't reveal, lest it spoil his plans. Perhaps, Twain meant to satirize Tom as a callous, egotistical

adventurer. When he shows up at the Phelps farm, he takes the part of Sid, the reviled goody-goody brother from Tom Sawyer. His tedious, over-extended scheme, he calls an "evasion"--from the title of a Dumas romance-- with the English meaning all too apparent. Although Tom's behavior is inexcusable, Jim is set free and Tom and Huck are both wildly applauded at the end, just as they are at the end of Tom Sawyer. But at what costs: Huck's hard-won compassion, his longed-for independence, and his total self-sacrifice to the survival of another human being.

Perhaps the Tom Sawyer-like ending of Huck Finn reveals just that--namely, that freedom, compassion and even love belong only to youth and cannot survive into adulthood. We thus cheer Huck on when he decides again to escape the good intentions of doting guardians: "I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before." The "Territory" ahead Huck vows to escape to is not the real West we hope for him, but only "Ingean Territory", the imaginary West where Tom plans to escape with Jim. It is Tom Sawyer's "West," not very far from St Petersburg, where Tom and his gang will catch up with Huck and likely persuade him to participate in more "evasions."

As Sam Clemens found his illustrious life as Mark Twain become more and more hounded by disasters, particularly catastrophic financial setbacks and the illness or death of loved ones, he clung all the more tenaciously to Tom Sawyer's view of boyhood, as an enchanted period, an "evasion" and a refuge from sorrow and despair. He started a continuation of Huck Finn, "Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians," in which Huck, Tom and Jim are back together again enjoying a dare-devil romp out west. In Tom Sawyer Abroad (1894), Huck, Tom and Jim reach Egypt in a balloon and in Tom Sawyer Detective (1896) Huck tells the story of Tom's clever solving of a crime. These fanciful adventures testify to Twain's resistance to the mounting burdens of adulthood, the increasing pains of aging and even mortality itself. But even clever sleuths like Tom Sawyer and virtuous compatriots like Huck Finn must face old age. Twain contemplated a tale about their demise, which reveals

how thoroughly he was charmed by innocence and disillusioned by experience. An 1891 notebook entry specifies that Huck, now 60 years old and insane, returns to St. Petersburg and piteously searches everywhere for familiar childhood faces, then "Tom comes at last from sixty years' wandering in the world, and attends Huck and together they talk of old times; both are desolate, life has been a failure, all that was lovable, all that was beautiful is under the mold. They die together." Sam Clemens never shook himself free from thinking that life, his life, was a failure; fortunately, Mark Twain believed sufficiently in the immortality of youth in its most heroic moments, which will surely keep his art at its best, in the eyes of readers, forever young.

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Emily Dickinson: Implication of Time and Place

Emily Dickinson

1830 - 1886

Born in Amherst, Massachusetts. Educated at Amherst Academy and at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. Brought up in a religious, puritanical environment. Withdrew from society to write poetry of a profoundly original nature. Author Thomas Wentworth Higginson recognized her genius but advised her not to publish her work because of its violation of literary convention. After her death, nearly two thousand poems were found among her papers. From this mass of material, Higginson later reluctantly edited the first published selection of her work. Poems (1890) enjoyed popular and critical success.

Synopsis Poetry of Emily Dickinson

Dickinson poems may be grouped under classifications of nature; art and imagination; friendship, love and society; suffering and growth; and immortality and religion.

Most of her poems are written in short stanzas, mostly quatrains, with short lines usually rhyming on the second and fourth lines. A large number of Dickinson's rhymes are what we call partial slant on (off) rhymes. She was aware that she was violating convention here, but she stuck to her own ways. These stanza forms took their chief source from the standard Protestant hymns of her day.

Emily Dickinson's poetry is deep and mysterious wherein one can find many examples of symbolism and allegory.

Emily Dickinson: Implications of Time and Place

by Judith Davis Miller
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Every poet is influenced to some extent by his time, his place. It is difficult to imagine Shakespeare without his Elizabethan London, Wordsworth without his early 19th century Lake country, or Frost without his 20th century New Hampshire. Yet, some are influenced more than others: shaped, limited, molded by the forces peculiar to where and when they live to such an extent that the biography is almost necessary to a thorough understanding of their work. Such is the case of Emily Dickinson.

The earliest and closest of these forces, was, of course, Emily's family, which consisted of her father, Edward Dickinson, her mother, Lavinia Norcross Dickinson, her older brother, William Austin, and her younger sister, Lavinia. Of these, surely her father had the most pronounced effect on who Emily became, both in terms of his heritage and in terms of his own personality. A representative of the seventh generation of Dickinsons to inhabit the Connecticut River Valley, Edward epitomized the culmination of a history of fierce political independence and adherence to Calvinist principles. His personality has been described as being austere and sober; he was the kind of man who could write to his intended bride, "Let us prepare for a life of

rational happiness," and was later described by Thomas Higginson, Emily's later mentor, as being "thin, dry, and speechless--I saw what (Emily's) life had been." It seems clear that he dominated the life of his family, who catered to his needs and obeyed his laws. Yet for Emily at least there was added to her relationship with him affection, respect, and even a certain affinity of temperament.

His influence on her poetry is indirect rather than direct, seen in Emily's characterizations of God (she once likened her father to Abraham, to Jehovah) and in her depictions of a certain type of male character. Of these, the poem "I fear a Man of frugal Speech" is illustrative. In it, the poet contrasts her fear of the "Silent Man" with her ability to endure the "Haranguer," or "Babbler." She is wary, she says, of the man who weighs his speech carefully instead of spending it freely. In characteristic Dickinson fashion, the end of the poem reverses the surface intention of the first seven lines, however, and we realize that the poem has been tongue in cheek, ironic, when she writes, "I fear that he is Grand--." "Grand" here surely means large of spirit, going beyond the ordinary and the temporal to the extraordinary and the eternal; in other words, partaking in the awe that is part of the response to deity. This gives point to the use of the word "fear" earlier in the poem, and intensifies the religious resonances of the piece. The poem is one of the best examples of Emily's complicated relationship with the father to whom she feared to admit that she hadn't understood his lessons in telling time (she later revealed to Higginson that because of this she did not learn to tell time by the clock until she was fifteen). On the one hand, there is fear; on the other, awe for a mind and spirit she respects.

The strict adherence to principle and emphasis on purity of spirit exemplified in Emily's father was part of the religious and social atmosphere of the Amherst in which Emily grew up. Most significant with respect to her development as a person and a poet was the importance placed on being born again, physically experiencing conversion to Christianity and acknowledging Christ as Savior. Emily's entire family underwent this conversion; all of her friends

did, as well, and she watched many of them do so when she attended Mary Lyons' Academy at Mount Holyoke; she alone never felt the sensation or was able fully and openly to acknowledge conversion. Judging from the poetry, at last a part of her dilemma arose from the very purity of experience required and represented by her own father; not feeling it, she could not fake it, nor does she seem to have been able to accept the complications of formal religious worship or the inevitable imperfection and even hypocrisy manifested by some of those who had declared themselves born again. Poems such as "Some keep the Sabbath going to Church," with its expression of worship through nature rather than through formal religious services, and "I never felt at Home--Below--," with its alienation from the conventional depictions of Paradise, suggest her attitude toward formal religion.

Her dislike, even disdain, for the socially based religious experiences of some of her fellow townswomen is verbalized in the poem, "What Soft--Cherubic Creatures--," in which she criticized the "Dimity Convictions" of the women who would be ashamed of Christ and of his "common" disciples, if they should encounter them.

Typically, Dickinson ends this poem with a reversal: Redemption would be just as ashamed of these "Brittle Lad(ies)" as they would be of its earthly embodiments. Later in life, as she came to terms with her own definition of self, she was even able to challenge the God of her ancestors and to at least question their interpretation of deity in poems such as "Heavenly Father"--take to thee," in which she portrays mankind apologizing to God for his duplicity in having created a world comprised of evil as well as of good, and "The Bible is an antique Volume," in which she suggests that if the Bible had been written by a "warbling Teller," it would have been of more positive influence; she asserts that "Orpheus' Sermon captivated--It did not condemn--." This indicates that the troubled relationship with Calvinist orthodoxy persisted to the end of her life: worked on, developed, but never put aside.

Equally influential in her poetry is the natural world that surrounded Emily Dickinson. When she

lived in Amherst, the town was still semi-rural; the land around her house included gardens and orchards, and across the street was the Dickinson meadow, a sizeable piece of land on which hay was grown. Some of her best poems are depictions of her natural surroundings, to whose beauty she responded with painful sensitivity. In the poem "The Robin's my Criterion for Tune," she acknowledges the extent to which this environment has shaped her very consciousness, the way in which she perceives life. She's "Orchard sprung;" "because I see-New Englandly--," she asserts, she sees life in the way shaped by that environment.

Thus, it is natural for her to see the nature around her as the embodiment of her abstract and spiritual ideas. Winter and snow, for instance, can be vehicles for loss and death, as in the poem, "It sifts from Leaden Sieves," where the very indirection of the language (the snow itself is never actually mentioned in the poem) helps to convey the tone of annihilation with which the poem ends. A happier response of this natural world is seen in the well-known "A Route of Evanescence," in which she powerfully captures the essence of a hummingbird, again using indirection (the word "hummingbird" is not used), this time with the effect of emphasizing this tiny bird's speed.

Happy in the natural world around her, content to stay at the home she loved, influenced perhaps by the domination of her father's personality over that of her mother, who has been described as a cipher, and sustained by the act of renunciation that was the very soul of Calvinism, which she seemed to be able to accept while not being able to accept its formal strictures, Dickinson seems to have been led to a life in which love relationships were unrequited and, or, kept at a distance, unconsumated.

Historians generally agree that she had very few encounters with the Reverend Charles Wadsworth, a clergyman of some renown who was happily married, in the late 1850's. Emily seems to have responded to the Reverend Wadsworth with an intensity of passion that matched the intensity of her purest feelings, and his assignment to the Calvary Church in San Francisco, a continent away, led to an outpouring of

poems of love unfulfilled that stand out in the canon of her poetry. Some of these are simply love poetry, such as "Wild Nights--Wild Nights!" in which she yearns to be with her beloved. Others indicate a more complicated and unique response to the experience, in which she uses the unrequited love to teach herself something about life and the nature of the self. In these Dickinson often blends her feelings of lost love with religious allusion that ads sanctity and idealism to her relationship and brings together these two forces in her life. For instance, in "I should have been too glad, I see," she describes her realizations that, had her love been fulfilled, she would have loved this world too much, would have had "The Palm--without the Calvary--;" she closes with a theme consistently echoed in her poems: that "'Tis Beggars--Banquets--can define--/ "Tis Parching--vitalizes Wine--;" in other words, it is the very act of suffering that teaches the meaning of life. In another poem written at approximately the same time, 1862, "One Crucifixion is recorded--only--," she even more closely parallels the suffering of Christ on the cross with the "nearer Crucifixion" she herself is experiencing at the departure of Wadsworth. For Dickinson, of course, the references to Calvary in these and other poems have a secret double meaning; for it refers not only to the place of Christ's crucifixion but to the distant church in which Wadsworth was serving.

Dickinson seems to have used this experience to learn to be alone; later in life, when she developed a love for Otis P. Lord, a judge who had been a close friend of her father's, she seems content to have left the relationship close, without considering marriage.

An insight into this capacity for being alone can be gained by looking at the poems in which Dickinson expressed her feelings about solitude. She seems to have learned, to borrow a phrase from John Keats, that, for her, "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter." The idealizing, abstracting, capacity for what are almost Platonic absolutes inherited from her father and from her Amherst environment came to dominate her responses to life. She has no need for physical visits from

friends, therefore, in her increasing hypersensitivity she finds greater pleasure from, and has greater ability to endure, the thought of those friends; at most, letters can be used to communicate thoughts and share experiences. In the poem, "Alone, I cannot be," she describes the eternal, absolute quality of this kind of visitors, who need no key to get into her home, and whose "going--is not--/ For they're never gone." Again, she pursues this absolute quality even further in "The Soul's Superior instants," which occur "to Her--alone." She describes a "Mortal Abolition," a putting aside of temporality, that gives brief insight into the nature of immortality. The lonely search necessitated by her wrestling with Calvinism led her finally to this resolute ability to stand alone and confront her destiny as a human being unique and apart. There is even a note of defiance in her realization that this sets her apart from her neighbors, as she asserts that "Much Madness is divinest Sense," and that much of the "sense" so characterized by the majority is in actuality "the starkest Madness."

By now it should be clear that Dickinson's quest for herself and for a higher reality has characteristics of the American Transcendentalism more commonly associated with Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The attempt to perceive the relationship between self and God, the study of nature as a means of seeing the essence of the spirit, self-discipline and self-reliance, and an emphasis on intuition--all of these characteristics of transcendentalism are present in Dickinson's poetry.

Her oft-expressed idea that suffering brings about an insight which can only be gained through pain is echoed in Emerson's essay "Compensation," while his essay "Circles," in which he writes that "The only sin is limitation," indicates an attitude very similar to what might be considered the highest flowering of Dickinson's philosophy, her idea of Circumference. This word indicated for her the realm of intangible, permanent truths, emanating from God, which lies beyond the world of the senses. In a sense, this is one solution to the problem of unorthodoxy, her replacement for the tenets of Calvinism. It is best illustrated in two poems. The

first is brief: "When Bells stop ringing--Church--begins--/ The Positive--of Bells--/ When Cogs stop--that's Circumference--/ The Ultimate--of Wheels." Here Dickinson uses her typical parodoxical, antithetical manner to define a word in terms of opposites. In another poem, "I saw no Way--The Heavens were stitched," she again uses a bell image to imagine experiencing Circumference, infinity; "I touched the Universe," she says, and "Went out upon Circumferences--/ Beyond the dip of the Bell."

This imaginative ability to travel beyond the limits of time and space is characteristic of Dickinson as she pushes her mind into infinity. Despite the correlations with other Transcendentalists, however, it should be pointed out that Dickinson is in all likelihood not their descendent, their student, but a fellow sharer in the spirit of the time that was a result of the attempt to continue some of the spiritual aspects of Calvinism while discarding some of the dogma; to refine the spirit of the law while discarding the law itself.

The influences discussed above are by no means all of those felt by Dickinson. A part of the Amherst influence, for instance, included a vernacular language that creeps every now and then into the poetry and the meters of the Protestant hymn writer, Isaac Watts. To this might be added her reading in the English Romantic poets and in the Victorians, and indeed in much of the English literary tradition. Finally, she read her fellow Americans, including a writer named Ik Marvell (Donald Grant Mitchell), echoes of whose sentimental effusions on nature mar some of her earlier nature poetry. But most important ultimately is that out of the combination of all of these influences Dickinson forged a consciousness and a poetry that are at the same time unique and uniquely quintessential embodiments of one spirit of her age. As she herself wrote, "This was a Poet."

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87

Activities

1. Reenact a pivotal scene from a literary work. Take students "on the road" to present these scenes to other classes, or invite them into your own classroom "theater." Some possibilities include:

   The first Thanksgiving with narration by William Bradford,

   Tom Sawyer returns home for his funeral,

   Eliza tries to convince Tom to run away to freedom,

   Thoreau spends the night in jail, or

   Ahab convinces the crew to go after the white whale.

2. Draw a symbol from the novel and have students tell how it is related to the story. For example, a fence and pail of whitewash; a coffin and whale; a cabin by the pond; an Indian wigwam and a Colonial cabin.

3. Construct a model of one or more buildings noted in the novel. Explain the building's design and function. Tell about the events that occurred in various locations.

4. Make lifesize cardboard figures of major characters from the novel to advertise the book.

5. Select a character from the literary work and develop his or her family tree. Attempt to keep it as authentic as the literary work allows. Indicate the date of birth, place of birth, marriage, and date of death.

6. Interview people in the community who have had job or life experiences similar to those in the book under study. Video-tape these experiences, if possible, and show to class.

7. Collect artifacts and memorabilia from the period of the literary work--books, postcards, coins, sheet music, photographs, other objects. Use to develop a "feel" for the time period.

8. Using the book, have students locate and list slang terms and write definitions. Use definitions and appropriate art work to compile a dictionary.

9. Prepare an illustrated time line to show individual lives or major events in the literary work.

10. Based on information presented in the book, draw a map showing where various events took place. Make the map as accurate as possible and label all important places.

11. Investigate the origin of place names used in the story--streets, rivers, geographic areas, towns, etc.

12. Plot the movement of characters in the book. Include the dates when they arrived and departed and brief information about what they were doing there.

13. Review the book for descriptions of buildings, streets, or other small-scale physical settings and draw or describe its appearance. This may be done as floor plans or maps. Tell as much as possible about the setting, including the significant events that took place there. Photograph or draw similar buildings and settings from your own community.

14. Rewrite a chapter of the book from the point-of-view of one of the lesser characters.

15. Pretend you are a social worker, school guidance counselor, or teacher. Write a dialogue about an incident one of the characters would be able to tell you, which is not necessarily the way the event happened in the book.

16. Choose a character(s) from the book who would most likely be the best candidate for the following positions and explain why:

    Space Shuttle Passenger
    Talk-show host or hostess
    Star of a soap opera
    President of IBM
    Vice President of the United States
    Undercover law enforcement agent

    Write a resume or an essay which would have them select your character for the position. List qualities possessed, experiences, previous education, etc.

17. Select a character from the book and have him or her do a commercial for a product they have used in the literary work--Tom Sawyer talks about whitewash, Ishmael's favorite harpoons, Thoreau's best pencils, etc.

18. Write a diary entry for a day in the life of one of the characters.

19. Brainstorm a list of emotions that have been expressed in the book--joy, sorrow, fear, pride, love, hate, anger, etc. Write about incidences that fit these categories.

20. Prepare a list of "trivia" type questions from the book and have students do a "scavenger" hunt through the book to locate the information.

AMERICAN INDIAN ARCHAELOGICAL INSTITUTE AND MUSEUM
(Route 199, Washington, Connecticut 06793 838-0518).

Artifacts from local Paleo-Indian campsite 10,000 years old, nature/habitat trail, and longhouse. Information and exhibits on life of the native American prior to the arrival of Europeans. Welcomes school visits and has various programs. Museum Shop open year round Monday to Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

ARROWHEAD, (780 Holmes Road, Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01212).

The home of Herman Melville and where he wrote Moby Dick. Open daily from Memorial Day through October 31. Nearby is the Herman Melville Memorial Room, a national center for Melville studies, at the Berkshire Athenaeum, 1 Wendall Avenue, Pittsfield. It houses books, pictures, letters and memorabilia.

CONNECTICUT COMMUNITY COLLEGES. (Office of Public Relations, various cities).

College personnel available to speak on a wide variety of topics. Often done through the college as a community service without charge. Usually limited to geographic area served by college.

CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY, (Speakers Bureau, New Britain, Connecticut 06050 827-7383).

University personnel available to speak on a wide variety of topics. Fees are negotiable and vary.

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY. (1 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06105 236-5621).

CHS maintains a library and museum featuring exhibits on aspects of Connecticut history and has exhibits, slide programs, conducts workshops and welcomes tours. CHS also maintains file of speakers. Fees vary.

CONNECTICUT HISTORY AND CULTURE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND RESOURCE GUIDE FOR TEACHERS. David M. Roth, ed. (Hartford: The Connecticut Historical Commission, 1985, 555 p.).

Published to celebrate 350 years of Connecticut history, this book contains a wealth of information on historical and contemporary Connecticut, including an extensive survey of people and events, an annotated listing of history organizations and related resources, and suggestions for teaching about Connecticut history.

CONNECTICUT HUMANITIES COUNCIL, (41 Lawn Avenue, Wesleyan Station, Middletown, Connecticut 06457 347-6888).

Maintains a resource center with a growing collection of films, video cassettes, and print materials related to the humanities. Many are available on free loan basis. Among the literary titles in the resource center, is a film series on The American Short Story, length from 30 to 60 minutes.

Parker Adderson, Philosopher by Ambrose Bierce
The Jolly Farmer by Henry James
The Blue Hotel by Stephen Crane
I'm A Fool by Sherwood Anderson
Soldier's Home by Ernest Hemingway
Bernice Bobs Her Hair by F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Displaced Person by Flannery O'Connor
Almos' a Man by Richard Wright
The Music School by John Updike
Paul's Case by Willa Cather
The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg by Mark Twain
The Jilting of Granny Weatherall by Katherine Anne Porter

The Greatest Man in the World by James Thurber
The Sky is Gray by Ernest J. Gaines
The Golden Honeymoon by Ring Lardner
Rappaccini's Daughter by Nathaniel Hawthorne

The CHC also has a listing of over 800 scholars who have indicated an interest in participating in public programs in the humanities. Contact CHC for a copy of "The Connecticut Directory of Humanities Scholars."

The CHC also promotes humanities in education and other fields by funding appropriate programs. They are particularly interested in working with teachers in developing proposals.

CONNECTICUT HUMANITIES COUNCIL, Friends of, (41 Lawn Avenue, Wesleyan Station, Middletown, Connecticut 06457).

A support group that publishes a quarterly newsletter, "Humanities News," other publications and information of interest.

CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY, (Division of Library Development, Film Center, 786 South Main Street, Middletown, Connecticut 06457 344-2654).

Loans films to any local branch library. Arrangements may be made through local library.

CONSCIENCE AND COURAGE: LEGENDS, HEROES, AND VILLAINS IN CONNECTICUT HISTORY. (The Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut 1986) $3.00.

This small packet of teaching material contains information about the 'daring Joseph Wadsworth, the young captain who saved Connecticut's charter from falling into the hands of the British in the 1680's, the courageous idealism of Nathan Hale, and the treasonous betrayal of Benedict Arnold. Especially useful for examining how verifiable historic facts have been colored by elements of legend and fiction.

THE COUNCIL FOR BASIC EDUCATION, Independent Study in the Humanities, Princeton, New Jersey 08641).

To improve the preparation of teachers in the humanities, CBE funds individual high school teachers for independent summer projects. Write for further information and application forms.

EMILY DICKINSON: A CERTAIN SLANT OF LIGHT, color 27 min. (available from the Connecticut State Library).

"Julie Harris embodies the poet and reads her poems in the rooms where Dickinson lived and wrote in Amherst, Massachusetts. The quiet lyrical character of her poetry comes through in the beautiful readings, the serene settings."

FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY SPEAKERS DIRECTORY, (Office of Special Events, Fairfield University, Fairfield, Connecticut 06430 255-5411).

Has free directory listing topics, available speakers, and other pertinent information. Arrangements and fees, if any, made directly with speaker.

THE GREATER HARTFORD ALLIANCE OF CULTURAL EDUCATORS, (Contact Nora O. Howard, Director of Education and Development, Wethersfield Historical Society, 150 Main Street, Wethersfield, Connecticut 06109).

This informal association of non-profit cultural organizations in the Hartford area seeks to, among other things, provide information and services to schools and teachers. Write for Cultural Connection Sourcebook which provides information about school programs, reservations and fees, etc. for museums, historical societies and other organizations.

GREATER HARTFORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE, (Office of Public Relations, 71 Woodland Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06105 549-4200).

College personnel available to speak in the Hartford area on a wide variety of topics.

THE HOUSE THAT MARK BUILT. Color 26 min. (Available from Connecticut State Library).

Twain's house is one of Hartford's featured attractions. This film explores the house at a leisurely pace while stories of Twain and his family are related. Excellent introduction to other Twain material, or prelude to a visit to the house.

HUMANITIES PROGRAMS FOR OLDER ADULTS: A RESOURCE GUIDE, by David P. Shuldiner, Connecticut State Department of Aging. (Available from the Connecticut Humanities Council).

This resource guide, although compiled for older residents of the state, includes numerous resources for anyone interested in the humanities--films, videocassettes, exhibits, museum and historical society programs, and a useful list of speakers.

THE LEGEND OF MARK TWAIN. Color 32 min. (Available from University of Connecticut, Erickson Memorial Film Library, Storrs, Connecticut 06268). Rental $13.00.

Traces Samuel Clemens' remarkable life and career, and dramatizes selections from two of his well-known classics The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County. Visits his boyhood home in Hannibal, Missouri. Discusses his adventures and his brief involvement in the Civil War.

THE LITERATURE OF CONNECTICUT HISTORY, by Christopher Collier and Bonnie B. Collier, 1983. (Available from the Connecticut Humanities Council).

A comprehensive bibliography of publications having to do with Connecticut people, places and events. An extremely valuable source for anything about Connecticut history.

HERMAN MELVILLE: CONSIDER THE SEA. Color 28 min. (Available from Connecticut State Library).

This compelling film essay exploring the life, work and driving forces of 19th century American writer Melville contains many biographical facts; but it reaches beyond them by virtue of its beautiful nautical photography, lyrical script, and complex structure.

MONTE CRISTO COTTAGE MUSEUM AND LIBRARY, (325 Pequot Avenue, New London, Connecticut 06320 443-0051).

Boyhood home of American dramatist Eugene O'Neil and setting for O'Neill's Ah Wilderness and Long Day's Journey Into Night, the cottage has been restored to its original Victorian style architecture. It houses O'Neill memorabilia and other theater artifacts. A multi-media presentation is shown daily. The staff seeks to assist scholarly utilization of the cottage.

THE MYSTIC SEAPORT MUSEUM, (Mystic, Connecticut 06355 572-0711).

Located along the Mystic River, this American Maritime Museum recreates a 19th century New England village, and its relationship with the sea. Exhibits tools, equipment, and materials as they were used in the 19th century. Also located here is the Charles W. Morgan, the last wooden whaling ship in existence. Tours and special programs can be arranged.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES, (Public Affairs Office, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506 (202) 786-0438).

NEH promotes and funds efforts in the humanities, most notable is a series of summer seminars for secondary school teachers. Write for literature and application forms.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HUMANITIES COUNCILS, (12 South 6th Street, Suite 527, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402).

An organization of state humanities councils that shares information and supports humanities through programs, grants, journals and newsletters.

NATIONAL HUMANITIES FACULTY, (1736 Lowergate Drive, Atlanta, Georgia 30322).

Supports humanities through programs, grants, journals and newsletters.

NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM, (18 Johnny Cake Hill, New Bedford, Massachusetts (617) 997-0046).

Museum contains art and artifacts of the whaling industry and of a nineteenth century whaling village. Numerous references to Melville and Moby Dick.

THE PALACE THEATRE OF THE PERFORMING ARTS, (61 Atlantic Street, Stamford, Connecticut, School Outreach Program, Margaret Booker 359-0009).

PHILIPS, DAVID, (Professor of English, Eastern Connecticut State University, Willimantic, Connecticut 06226).

Philips has spent nearly 15 years gathering 200 folk-legends, stories of actual people, places, and events passed on through the years by one person telling another. Some 70 of these are in his book Legendary Connecticut. Has appeared before many groups to talk about his work and specific legends.

PLYMOUTH PLANTATION, (Plymouth, Massachusetts 02367).

Recreated "living" village museum of the first settlers. People dress and speak as they did in the original village.

SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY, (The Public Affairs Office, New Haven, Connecticut 06515 397-4223).

University personnel available to speak on a wide variety of topics without charge. Contact school for a copy of "The Southern Speakers' Bureau" booklet.

STEUDERMAN, HELEN, (Story Teller, South Norwalk Public Library, 10 Washington Street, South Norwalk, Connecticut 06854).

Steuderman will come to your class to tell a story of historic or literary periods related to your curriculum.

TANTAQUIDGEON INDIAN MUSEUM, (Route 32, Uncasville, Connecticut 06382 848-9145).

Museum and grounds are filled with Indian life and lore. Emphasis on Eastern woodland Indians. Open May through October, Tuesday-Sunday. Donation.

THOREAU'S MAINE WOODS , Color 20 min. (Available from Connecticut State Library).

Record of a canoe journey through Maine retracing similar trip made by Thoreau in the 1840's and 50's. Poet Richard Wilbur reads from Thoreau's journal as the beautiful wilderness seems to float by.

MARK TWAIN HOUSE AND MEMORIAL. 247-0998, and **HARRIET BEECHER STOWE HOUSE**, 522-9258 (351 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut).

Both houses contain family furnishings and household artifacts. Tours available upon request, special attention given to specific areas of interest. Curriculum kits available for rental or purchase. A 15 min. filmstrip Harriet Beecher Stowe at Nook Farm, is available to schools without charge.

UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT, (Director of Public Information, Bridgeport, Connecticut 06601 576-4527).

University personnel available to speak on a wide variety of topics. Fees, if any, are negotiable and vary.

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT, (Speakers Bureau, U-144, Storrs, Connecticut 06258 486-4217).

Hundreds of University personnel available to speak on a wide variety of topics, without charge to school groups.

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD, (The Speakers Bureau, Office of University Affairs, West Hartford, Connecticut 06117 243-4230).

University personnel available to speak on a wide variety of topics.

WADSWORTH ANTHENEUM, (600 Main Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06115 278-2670).

One of oldest art galleries in the country. will design tours for school groups of all ages to fit specific needs. Also has a slide rental library.

THE NOAH WEBSTER MUSEUM FOUNDATION, (227 South Main Street, West Hartford, Connecticut 06107 527-5362).

Restored 18th century home, offers educational programs that focus on learning by doing. The house/museum also houses exhibits of regional and local history. Has an outreach program to work with school and community groups.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, (Office of Public Information and Publications, Middletown, Connecticut 06475 347-9411).

University personnel available to speak on a wide variety of topics. Contact the Office of Public Information for a copy of Experts at Wesleyan University.